Spring 5-1-2023

Food and Sovereignty: Enacting Mino-Bimaadiziwin in Gaa-waabaabiganikaag

Zaryn Prussia
zprussia@macalester.edu

Food and Sovereignty:

Enacting Mino-Bimaadiziwin in Gaa-waabaabiganikaag

Zaryn Prussia

Spring 2022

Anthropology Honors Thesis

Advisor: Olga Gonzalez

Table of Contents (Anishinaabemowin)

Miigwechiwitaagoziwin – 3

Chapter 1: Mino-Bimaadiziwin – 4

Chapter 2: Indoonji-debwe miinawaa Indoonji-akinoomaagoz Anishinaabewakiing – 12

- Wenjiiyaan – 12
- Giiweyaan – 15
- Gaa-izhichigeyaan – 18
- Indaanawenjige – 25

Chapter 3: Zanagadoon onow Gaagige-aakoziwin miinawaa Bakadewin – 28

Chapter 4: Wiisiniwin, Aakoziwin, Onjidawin – 32

- Gaa-pi-izhigoziyang Gaa-waabaabiganikaag – 32
- Aanji-wiisiniwin – 38
- Aanimiziiwigamigoon – 49

Chapter 5: Giwani-bimaadizimin – 52

- Ogii-wanishkwetoonaawaa iw Gimino-Bimaadiziwininaan – 52
- Gichi-wani-gitigewin miinawaa Aakoziiwakamigaawin – 57
- Naniizaanad iw Aanjiwebak – 65
- Gidaa-manaaji'aanaan Aki – 69

Chapter 6: Bimaadiziikaawin – 75

Chapter 7: Miinikaaning Azhe-onji-zaagakii Mino-Bimaadiziwin – 84

- Gaa-izhi-miinigooyang Mandaamin Niizhing – 84
- Wiidookodaadiwin – 88
- Giiwekiiwin – 95

Mii Sa Iw – 100

Gaa-agindaasoyaan – 104

Table of Contents (English)

Giving Thanks – 3

Chapter 1: Good Living and Well-Being – 4

Chapter 2: I Speak from the Heart and Learn from the Land in Anishinaabewaki – 12

Situating White Earth – 12

Coming Home – 15

My Methodology – 18

I Refuse – 25

Chapter 3: The Problems of Chronic Illness and Hunger – 28

Chapter 4: Food, Sickness, and Sovereignty – 32

When We Moved to White Earth – 32

A Changing Diet – 38

"Places of Suffering": Boarding Schools – 49

Chapter 5: We are Living in Imbalance – 52

Disruption of Mino-Bimaadiziwin – 52

Large-scale Industrial Agriculture and Pollution – 57

The Threat of Climate Change – 65

We Must Respect the Land – 69

Chapter 6: Abundance of Life – 75

Chapter 7: Mino-Bimaadiziwin Emerges from a Seed – 84

How We Were Gifted Corn Twice – 84

Helping Each Other – 88

Returning to the Land – 95

Conclusion – 100

Bibliography – 104

Miigwechiwitaagoziwin

Giving Thanks

I must first thank my mom, Leah Prussia. You have worked so hard to raise me with a passion and pride for our Anishinaabe ways. I owe so much of my passion and my success to you. Gichi-miigwech for always being there for me. Chi-miigwech to my community Gaa-waabaabiganikaag and to those who dedicated their voices and wisdom to this project, especially Lisa Brunner, Bob Shimek, Tammy Bellanger, Diane McArthur, Stephanie Williams, and Simon Zornes. Chi-miigwech to my grandparents, Rick and Diann Prussia, and to my friends Izaiah Asher and Asia Bevins who gave me a place to stay while doing this research. Chi-miigwech to the White Earth Research Review Board for your patience and guidance. And Chi-miigwech to all the elders from Anishinaabewaki and the rest of Turtle Island who have taught me what it means to be Anishinaabe.

Thank you and muchas gracias to all the professors who have supported me during these four years at Macalester and abroad in Ecuador. You have not only helped me to prepare for this project but for life. I must extend a big thank you to my mentor Olga Gonzalez who was there every step of the way. You have sat with me for hours on this project, applications, and more. You have always encouraged me to pursue my goals and grow as a student and activist. Thank you also to the Macalester anthropology department and professors Arjun Guneratne, Kirisitina Sailita, and Karin Vélez who also provided support and advice for this project.

Miinawaa chi-miigwech wiidookawiyeg miinawaa zhawenimiyeg apane Gizhe-manidoo, Gimaamaakinaaan, Aadizookaanag, Indaaanikoobijiganibaneg, miinawaa gakina Indinawemaaganidog.

Chapter 1: Mino-Bimaadiziwin

Good Living and Well-Being

My names are Migizi Daa-Bi-Naagozi and Zaryn Prussia. I come from the Anishinaabe nation of Gaa-waabaabiganikaag or White Earth which rests in northwestern Minnesota. As a child, my mom worked hard to raise me with a connection to the land and my culture. When we lived out on White Earth, I remember she used to bring me to the seasonal camps on Elbow Lake and White Earth lake where there were plenty of other kids my age to play with, and where there was lots of knowledge being passed on. I can remember waking up in my mom's tent and heading outside to see what was going on. Gigichi-mishimoosinaan, our Great Grandfather Sun, smiled warmly over the camp breathing life into the glowing green leaves of Ash and Pine and onto the Water where Miskwaadesi, the Painted Turtle, rested on a log shimmering orange and yellow in his rays. Usually, there were a few adults feeding wood and offering Tobacco to the Fire, while others were cooking for the children and other adults. Much of what we ate at those camps was harvested by Anishinaabe people on the reservation. In those days, I remember eating a lot of venison, Wild Rice, and Walleye which are still my favorite foods to this day. During the day, children and adults gathered in groups and did Anishinaabe things; some families went to the lake to fish, others went out into the bush looking for berries, while others sat at tables and learned how to make Porcupine quill art or Birchbark baskets. I also remember when all of us kids would venture out into the shallow Waters of Gaa-waabaabiganikaag Zaaga'iagan, White Earth Lake, to swim and play, pretending we were warriors wrestling and splashing each other in her warm Waters. At night, elders told stories about our hero Waynaboozhoo, animals, and other ancestors while everyone sat huddled around

a campfire or within the comfort of a cabin hall. During storytime, there was always a lot of laughter, as our voices echoed out into the chattering forests and thickets of Frogs and Crickets here in Gaa-waabaabiganikaag.[1]

Some of my most memorable experiences come from these days at White Earth's seasonal camps. These camps are a revitalization of our ancestral ways when we as Anishinaabe people lived out in the woods and lived with the seasons doing things in community. The elders and teachers at these camps provided many Anishinaabe children like myself a chance to practice our traditions, be in community, be happy, and eat healthy. The way of life I am describing is what we Anishinaabe call Mino-Bimaadiziwin or "Good Living", a concept that is shared by Indigenous peoples throughout Turtle Island (Abya Yala or the Americas) (Huanacuni 2015). Michael Vulkelich, an Anishinaabe language teacher and public speaker from Turtle Mountain Nation whose videos have helped me to understand Mino-Bimaadiziwin, breaks down the phrase as such: Mino means "Good; peace, well-being that comes from balance", bim means "along space or time", and aadiziwin means "way of being/ in a particular condition".[2] Different from capitalist notions of "the good life", where happiness comes from consumption and individual wealth, Mino-Bimaadiziwin is a way of life that emphasizes communal well-being, peace, and harmony between human beings and every single being on Mother Earth. The "the good life" is noun-based and focuses on objection and ownership. Therefore, I choose to define Mino-Bimaadiziwin as "Good Living" and "Well-Being" to emphasize

---

[1] I capitalize the names of animals, plants, elements, and celestial bodies in order to recognize their living spiritual beings.

[2] See Red Lake Nation College. 2021. "James Vukelich - Mino-Bimaadiziwin: The Good Life!" 2021. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmszPwxjWHc.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin as an active, generative, and shared way of life that is connected to our health and community.

When I practiced Mino-Bimaadiziwin at the seasonal camps, I was also practicing what many environmentalists would call food sovereignty, defined by the international farmers' organization Via Campesina as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations."[3] For many researchers, this definition of food sovereignty would probably be an accurate way to describe the seasonal camps and also my research on White Earth with food literacy and gardening, but it does not even begin to describe our relationships with the land. Mino-Bimaadiziwin is about living in balance and harmony within a larger community made up of human beings and those beings who are not human, such as the plants, animals, birds, insects, Sun, Moon, Rain, Water, Fire, and all forces and manifestations that inhabit this Earth and beyond. Influential scholars, including Indigenous scholars,[4] have referred to these beings as non-human (Grusin 2015), more-than-human (Davis and Todd 2017), and other-than-human (De la Cadena 2015). As Anishinaabe people, we know that we hold familial, biological, physical, cosmic, and spiritual relationships with all of creation. In honoring our close relationships, I prefer to refer to these "more-than-human" beings as

---

[3] See La Vía Campesina. "Food Sovereignty, a Manifesto for the Future of Our Planet." *La Vía Campesina*, 13 Oct. 2021, viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty-a-manifesto-for-the-future-of-our-planet-la-via-campesina/.

[4] See pages 53-54 in this document.

Gidinawemaaganinaanig which means “our relatives” in a very inclusive and dear sense. Gidinawemaaganinaanig also includes family, ancestors, and you too.

To practice Mino-Bimaadiziwin means to be a good relative. James Dumont, an Anishinaabe elder and professor from Shawanaga First Nation writes, “All that is created consciously cares about the harmony and well-being of life; all things are regarded ‘persons’ and as ‘relatives’ Plants, trees, animals, rocks and unseen forces of nature are also considered as ‘persons’. We are all related to one another as persons, and are responsible for maintaining good and harmonious relationships within the ‘extended family’ of persons. Native regard for life is one that recognizes the value of all life – of all ‘persons’” (Foushee and Gurneau 2010, 33). This harmonious relationship with all of creation that Dumont refers to is Mino-Bimaadiziwin, a concept that is central to acting as an Anishinaabe land steward. Throughout my life, especially during my research this summer in Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, the land, and the elders have helped me to realize the importance of returning to Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

These seasonal camps were started by the late Earl Hoagland, the man who gave me my Anishinaabe name, and his wife Kathy Hoagland. Both Earl and Kathy had a love for our culture and wanted to pass it on to future generations. So, thanks to them, I experienced Mino-Bimaadiziwin before I even knew how to say the phrase. I believe these childhood experiences have always stuck with me in helping me to realize who I am and who I will be. Within my heart, I carry the dream of the Hoaglands and my ancestors, for a return to our traditions, language, spirituality, and original path on this Earth.

Despite these important cultural experiences within my childhood, it took me some years to find my Anishinaabe self and this passion for our traditional way of life, as I grappled

with my mixed-race identity, spirituality, and physical disconnection from both my community and family at White Earth when I moved away at twelve years of age. My reconnection with our traditional ways, Anishinaabe-Izhitwaawin, was re-ignited in high school when I became more involved with learning our language and ceremonies, thanks to my Mom and Anishinaabe elders. Moreover, it was in the fall of 2021 when the importance of specifically Mino-Bimaadiziwin came back into my life. During the fall, I studied abroad in Ecuador for four months with a program called Rehearsing Change, whose mission is to create positive social change in local communities through performing arts, volunteerism, and above all centering community leadership and goals. My study in Ecuador has been one of the most developmental and impactful experiences in my life. While in Ecuador, I stayed in various rural campesino and Indigenous Kichwa communities such as Yunguilla, Río Muchacho, Pintag, Rhiannon, la Mariscal, and Mushullakta. All of these communities were working to be more sustainable and independent in various decolonial ways. It was in these communities where I first learned about permaculture, a term David Holmgren coined to define, "Consciously designed landscapes which mimic the patterns and relationships found in nature, while yielding an abundance of food, fiber and energy for provision of local needs" (Ferguson and Lovell 2014, 252). Permaculture echoes Mino-Bimaadiziwin, especially in regards to feeding a community through traditional and reciprocal relationships with nature.

Within these Ecuadorian communities, I got to experience Mino-Bimaadiziwn from other perspectives. In Río Muchacho, for example, I saw how its founders Dario and Nicky were able to integrate systems of rainwater, animals, and orchards to create a sustainable system that worked with the environment, instead of against it. In Pintag, I worked alongside

community counterparts to re-forest a former pasture in an effort to regenerate original ecosystems. In Mushullakta, I helped to harvest local bamboo for sustainable construction, reforest a previously deforested area, and design forest gardens. Although some of these communities would be small compared to White Earth in terms of land area and population, I was able to see the sheer abundance of food that just a small group of people could produce with limited land, and how it was made possible through respectful and balanced relationships with the environment. For breakfast, lunch, and dinner we filled our stomachs with an abundance of delicious foods; there were fruit salads, freshly caught fish, ceviche, traditional chicken soups, and more. Thanks to my program and the openness of these Ecuadorian communities, I was able to experience Mino-Bimaadiziwin, or as they call it, Sumak Kawsay, in a different part of the world.

In thinking about White Earth now, we unfortunately do not enjoy an abundance of food. Almost fifty percent White Earth's Anishinaabe people are living in poverty (Siple, 2011). Our nation is also the site of the poorest county in the state of Minnesota, Mahnomen county.[5] White Earth is also a federally recognized "food desert" (Price 2017), meaning it is difficult for families to find food, especially healthy food, to eat because of distance and because of lack of healthy options. Due to living in a "food desert" many Anishinaabe people on the reservation eat what is available to them, healthy or unhealthy, and as a result many people suffer from chronic disease like diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

---

[5] See The Center Square. "By the Numbers: Mahnomen Ranks the Poorest of Minnesota Counties." The Center Square, 2019, https://www.thecentersquare.com/minnesota/by-the-numbers-mahnomen-ranks-the-poorest-of-minnesota-counties/article_2c3345c4-8cba-11e9-bdd9-97ef8dc1e188.html

At this point, there may be many who wonder, why write or care about White Earth? Here at Macalester College, I have met many students who did not know where White Earth is. In fact, some have never even heard about the Anishinaabe, one of the principal Indigenous peoples of Minnesota. Worldwide, Indigenous peoples are fighting for the restoration of land, life, and sovereignty in the face of settler colonialism (the invasion of Indigenous lands and replacement of Indigenous people with colonizers), assimilation (the erasure of Indigenous culture, language, spirituality, and identity within non-dominant communities for colonial versions), and extractivism (the violent and unsustainable taking of natural "resources" from the land). We all have voices and stories that need to be heard. This honors thesis should contribute to an essential part of White Earth's Dibaajimowin (story). Our Dibaajimowin is also an act of what White Earth scholar Gerald Vizenor calls "survivance" or "an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name… Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry" (2008, 19). Whether you are from Minnesota or somewhere else in this vast and connected world, I believe our story here in White Earth can help you to connect with Mino-Bimaadiziwin in your community, and help you to enact your own sovereignty.

In Ecuador, I was inspired to help bring back Mino-Bimaadiziwin to White Earth. So, during the summer of 2022, in June and July, I spent time with the White Earth Tribal and Community College and with local gardeners to learn about restoring Mino-Bimaadiziwin through primarily gardening. During our work together, I have continued to reflect on these questions: Why are Anishinaabe people struggling with food insecurity and chronic disease? And how can practicing Mino-Bimaadiziwin, especially through gardening, restore well-being

and sovereignty within our own lives and community? From working with my community this summer and literature review, I have come to realize that our current health and food concerns are rooted in a disruption of our traditional foodways, caused principally by European settlers, the United States government, and extractivism. We have thus concluded that in order to overcome the systemic issues harming our community, we must restore our traditional foodways, which ultimately means restoring Mino-Bimaadiziwin and our tribal sovereignty.

Chapter 2: Indoonji-debwe miinawaa Indoonji-akinoo'amaagoz Anishinaabewakiing: I Speak from the Heart and Learn from the Land in Anishinaabewaki

Wenjiiyaan – Situating White Earth

Gaa-waabaabiganikaag rests in Northwestern Minnesota about 250 miles northwest of Minneapolis, 60 miles east of Fargo, North Dakota, and about 120 miles south of the Canadian border. With an area of 1093 square miles (1749 km), White Earth as a body of land is expansive. Its borders span three major ecoregions including the Great Plains, which stretch west to the Rocky Mountains, the temperate broadleaf forests, which stretch south to the Gulf of Mexico, and the mixed needle leaf forests, which stretch north and east to the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, this territory has encouraged a great deal of diversity. Before colonization, one could find animals from all these ecoregions including Caribou, Buffalo, Deer, and Elk roaming the same territory. Over the millennia, various tribes have lived in the region of White Earth such as the Tsistsistas (Cheyenne), Néhinaw (Cree), and of course, the Dakota, who were here before us and still call this region home. In the 1700s, the Anishinaabeg entered into this region of western Minnesota through periods of peace and war, after centuries of migration from Zhiiwitaagani-gichi-gaming, the Atlantic ocean, our original homeland, to find the prophesied food that grows on the Water, Manoomin or Wild Rice (Benton-Banai 1988; Meyer 1994).

Before 1867, there was no White Earth band of Anishinaabe. The traditional Anishinaabe bands that came to form our nation of White Earth were the Gichi-ziibiwininiwag (Mississippi River band), Misi-zaaga'igani Anishinaabeg (Mille Lacs band), Gichigamiwininiwag (Lake Superior band), Aniibiminani-ziibiwininiwag (Pembina band), and

the Makandwewininiwag (Pillager band) who I trace my White Earth lineage from on my father's side, the Annettes (Meyer 1994). Thus, it was only after the creation of White Earth in 1867 and the forced relocation of some of these families to White Earth, that we came to be known as the White Earth band of Anishinaabeg.

Each of our original bands were led by civil chiefs who were often men but also women. Our civil chiefs were the ones who dealt with the United States and other Indigenous and European nations, and made important decisions concerning the future of our people. Our chiefs earned their position partially through chiefly heritage and because they earned their people's respect as a skilled warrior, public speaker, hunter, spiritual person, or in serving their community. The leadership and legitimacy of our civil chiefs were always contingent on the overwhelming and consensual support of each family in the community, including the women who were the heads of the household. The chief always consulted with women and depended on their input in making decisions. Traditionally, our people consisted of seven hereditary clans who each had an important role in the community, including the Fish who were the intellectuals, the Bear who provided the people with protection and medicine, the Bird who were spiritual leaders, the Marten who were hunters and warriors, the Deer who were artisans and poets, and the Loon and the Crane who were civil chiefs. In Anishinaabe culture, our traditional roles have always been flexible, and over time, as we came into contact with Europeans and expanded across Turtle Island, clan roles became more flexible and chiefs were elected from other clans. This traditional consensus-based chieftainship changed in 1934 when the Indian Reorganization obliged White Earth and other Indigenous nations to adopt city-council-type governments based

on the United States' model. Thus, the current leadership of White Earth is made up of a democratically elected chairman and a group of district representatives.[6]

Today the population of White Earth numbers almost ten thousand, of which fifty-two percent are Anishinaabe, forty-four percent are white, with a minority of other ethnicities such as Black, Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Islander.[7] Within the reservation, there are various major villages including the mostly Anishinaabe villages of White Earth, Naytahwaush, Pine Point, Elbow Lake, and Rice Lake in the east, and the towns that were founded by settlers and the Great Northern Railway system including Mahnomen, Callaway, Ogema, and Waubun in the west.[8]

Our people traditionally made a living through hunting, gardening, foraging, fishing, trapping, and through massive trade networks that spanned across Turtle Island, from the Antarctic to the Arctic. As we came into contact with the French, British, and eventually American traders, we traded artisanry, animal skins, and local goods for European tools,

---

[6] Scholar Giniwgiizhig, who is also one of my teachers, provides more information in his dissertation on traditional Ojibwe leadership. See Giniwgiizhig – Flocken, Henry. 2013. "An Analysis of Traditional Ojibwe Civil Chief Leadership." PhD Disseration, University of Minnesota. http://purl.umn.edu/153332.

[7] See U.S. Census Bureau. "My Tribal Area." *Census Bureau*, 2021, www.census.gov/tribal/?st=27&aianihh=4595. Accessed 30 Apr. 2023; and Center For Indian Country Development. "White Earth Reservation." *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis*, 2017, www.minneapolisfed.org/indiancountry/resources/reservation-profiles/white-earth-reservation.

[8] See White Earth Reservation Business Committee. "Economic Development." White Earth Nation, whiteearth.com/divisions/weedo/home. Accessed 30 Apr. 2023; and LaRoque, Michael J. 2023. "White Earth Tribal Council Quarterly Report." White Earth Nation. https://whiteearth.com/assets/files/home/news/White%20Earth%20Tribal%20Council%20Quarterly%20Report.pdf.

clothing, and other goods (Meyer 1994). Because of trade, intermarriage, colonization, and subsequent assimilation, their way of life gradually blended with and partially replaced our traditional ways of life. After White Earth's inception, our subsistence and trade-based economy came to an end, and so began our increasing dependence on outside investment and government aid. Today, the main sources of revenue for the White Earth reservation are funding from the United States government, the Shooting Star Casino, and resource extraction which together bring in millions and are primarily used to provide education, healthcare, and housing for our people.[9]

Giiweyaan – Coming Home

After living away from my community for 10 years, I came back to my nation from Macalester, in June of 2022, with the goal to learn about gardening, plants, and Mino-Bimaadiziwin. The first place I visited was the White Earth Tribal and Community College in Mahnomen, where I often spent my days after school from ages seven to twelve while my mom was an educator there. At that time, I did not have a car and so Wasey'wugikwe (Tornado Woman) or Lisa Brunner, an auntie, elder, and one of the people I interviewed, drove me to the Tribal College while I was staying in town. When I exited the car, the college campus

---

[9] See White Earth Economic Development Office. 2013. "White Earth Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy." White Earth Nation. https://whiteearth.com/assets/files/economic%20development/CEDS%20Update%202013.pdf; and LaRoque, Michael J. 2023. "White Earth Tribal Council Quarterly Report." White Earth Nation. https://whiteearth.com/assets/files/home/news/White%20Earth%20Tribal%20Council%20Quarterly%20Report.pdf.

was just as I remembered it. The main building is constructed in the shape of a Turtle, with two shiny mint green rooftop-arms stretching out from the large domed building that forms the Turtle's shell and head. Mikinaak, the Turtle, is a central figure within Anishinaabe culture, literally forming the base of our world. Our name for the continent of America is Mikinaak Minis, "Turtle Island", constituting a memory of the creation of our home when our ancestor placed Aki, Earth, on a Turtle's back and re-created the world.

Behind the Turtle, or rather atop his shell, is the important teaching of Gwayakaadiziwin. I like to translate this word to "living in a balanced way", as the word Gwayak means "straight" or "correct" and aadizi means "to live or be a certain way". Mikinaak, on his path around the world, balances the Earth on his back, and so balances the seven central teachings of Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin, Anishinaabe Good Living. These seven teachings have given me guidance not only for this project, but for my life. These teachings are Zaagi'idiwin/Love, Zoongide'iwin/Bravery, Nibwaakaawin/Wisdom, Manaaji'idiwin/Respect, Debwewin/Truth, Dabasendizowin/Humility, and finally Gwaykaadiziwin, which is honesty and the balance of all these teachings.[10]

Gwaykaadizin, balance, is also a good word to describe my journey through this project. In the process of planning and putting into practice this research, I have followed Gwayakaadizin to create a balance between my voice and the voices of those whom I interviewed. I have also had to create a balance between two very different worlds, the Anishinaabe world and the academic world. While centering the needs and knowledge of my

---

[10] My interpretation of the seven teachings comes from the sum of my learning and memory. For more information on these teachings, see Benton-Banai, Edward. 1988. *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*. Indian Country Communications

community, I worked to meet the requirements of two Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and an Anthropology department. Although this work has been challenging at times, it has also been fulfilling to create something purposeful with my community.

Just perpendicular to Mikinaak, is a smaller and rectangular building, the Extension office of the Tribal College where Lisa served as the Community Extension Service Director. As a land-grant university, the Tribal College has received financial grants from the United States Department of Agriculture and established its own Extension office. According to the college website, the Extension office seeks "to promote a practical level of food literacy by providing teachings and activities that enhance food security for youth, families, and community"[11]. It was this work with food literacy that brought me to the Tribal College for my research. One of their main projects that I was involved with was what Lisa calls the "college campus pantry program". This program seeks to grow and distribute fresh produce to the community in addition to providing community members with a space to harvest their own food. This charming campus, as well as the backyards of two community members, Ishkode or Simon Zornes and Ozhaawashko-dewe'iganikwe (Blue Drum Woman) or Stephanie Williams, was the place of my fieldwork in June and July of 2022. This fieldwork was both academic as I conducted interviews and reflected on abstract ideas, and physical as I planted seeds, weeded plant beds, and harvested from the land.

[11] "Extension," White Earth Tribal & Community College, accessed April 20, 2023, https://www.wetcc.edu/extension.html

Gaa-izhichigeyaan – My Methodology

My Anishinaabe framework and methodology are inspired by my experience with sustainable community-based projects in Ecuador and from my interest in Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), which, as a research framework, ideally seeks to center the needs, participation, guidance, knowledge, and empowerment of community members. Thus, in designing a community-based Anishinaabe methodology, I have taken inspiration from previous CBPR projects in Anishinaabe communities, which have encouraged centering Anishinaabe ways of knowing, ethics, and practices, such as through storytelling, talking-circles, gifting, making offerings, and smudging (Blodgett et al. 2011; Cornect-Benoit et al. 2020; Domingo et al. 2021; Jacklin and Kinoshameg 2008; Webkamigad et al. 2020).

An important part of this community-based research was conducting it in consultation with White Earth's Research Review Board (RRB), which is our IRB. The goal of the RRB is to protect our people, lands, culture, and life from disrespect, exploitation, and harm. In contrast to regular Institutional Review Boards where the interaction ends after the IRB approves an application, my work with the RRB entailed not only obtaining authorization for research, but also creating a relationship based on communication and respecting the RRB's requirements and suggestions. An important requirement was that the data collected this summer, except for this manuscript, would ultimately belong to White Earth Nation and be handed over to the RRB for safekeeping. Furthermore, I could not share any of our data and thesis manuscript with anyone besides those who the RRB approved, such as my academic advisor and during my honors defense presentation. The RRB also reviewed my drafts and provided me with comments,

concerns, and words of encouragement. In protecting our people, they provided the final authorization to make this manuscript public.

In doing interviews with folks from White Earth, I tried not to over-inquire or ask too many questions, but listen openly and radically to what the person was saying, allowing them to guide the lesson. This type of open-ended interview approach is more reflective of Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin, the Anishinaabe way of knowing, and Anishinaabe Dibaajimowin, Anishinaabe storytelling. In my service as an Oshkaabewis, a helper and messenger for Anishinaabe elders, I have come to understand that, as young people, we have very little experience compared to our elders and that it is our job to listen and learn. Elders are good at teaching you what you ought to know, rather than what you want to know. But, it is also important to acknowledge that, as students, it is also our job to ask appropriate questions, because there are some things we may never learn if we do not ask.

In Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin, Miinidiwin, “giving to one another” or reciprocity, is the first step in receiving knowledge. Ever since I was small, I have learned the importance of passing gifts for knowledge. These gifts can consist of food, something beautiful, or something useful, but Asemaa, tobacco, is essential. Gifting is a way of honoring the person and their knowledge. Unlike western methods of research, this is not a transaction or research “incentive”, but a form of reciprocity and consent. When I met with people from White Earth, I passed bundles of tobacco and traditional Anishinaabe gifts like porcupine quill jewelry and beaded keychains, and some non-traditional ones like a gift card. In selecting these gifts, I thought not only about what would be a beautiful gift, but also about what would be a useful gift.

In addition to gifting elders and teachers, I also made offerings to Mother Earth and the plants because they were my teachers too. This is because Anishinaabe knowledge is not only transmitted orally, but through interaction with Aki, land. For us, this land-based education is called Akinoomaagewin. John Borrows, an Anishinaabe scholar of indigenous and constitutional law from Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation writes:

> The Nishnaabeg have long taken direction about how we should live through our interactions and observations with the environment. People regulate their behavior and resolve their disputes by drawing guidance from what they see in the behavior of the sun, moon, stars, winds, waves, trees, birds, animals, and other natural phenomenon. The Nishnaabeg word for this concept is gikinawaabiwin. We can also use the word akinoomaage, which is formed from two roots: Aki: noomaage. "Aki" means earth and "noomaage" means to point towards and take direction from. As we draw analogies from our surroundings, and appropriately apply or distinguish what we see, we learn about how to love, and how we should live in our lands (as quoted in Simpson 2014, 14-15).

As Indigenous peoples, we have developed our own systems of knowledge or "theory" over thousands of years, through relating with and living through Aki. My teachers have taught me that Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin is a holistic way of knowing, where knowledge is not just recollected in the brain, but in our bodies, hearts, and spirits. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, an Anishinaabekwe scholar from Alderville First Nation writes, "Theory also works a little differently within Nishnaabeg thought. 'Theory' is generated and regenerated continually through embodied practice and within each family, community and generation of people. 'Theory' isn't just an intellectual pursuit – it is woven within kinetics, spiritual presence and emotion, it is contextual and relational. It is intimate and personal, with individuals themselves holding the responsibilities for finding and generating meaning within their own lives" (2014, 7). As Simpson states, "Nishinaabeg thought" is both intergenerational and personal knowledge rooted in our own life experiences. So, in writing about what I learned this summer for this

paper, I have tried to approach this knowledge in the Anishinaabe way, drawing from our own ways of knowing and learning.

As a holistic pedagogy, Akinoomaagewin happens through open and aware observation and repetition of the land, meditation and reflection, and intuition. When our Anishinaabe ancestors first came to Turtle Island, our parents and preschool teachers were the Gidinawemaaganinaanig around us. They taught us the most basic and important skills of survival. The Wolf taught us how to hunt, the Bear taught us how to gather food and medicine, and the Beaver taught us how to make shelter. They taught us by showing us and having us repeat what they did.

During my summer in White Earth, I had plenty of time to receive Akinoomaagewin. For instance, the Tribal College hosted a leather-making workshop with Anishinaabe community educator Zac Earley who taught us how to turn raw deer hide into tanned leather. We learned to do so by watching how Zac scraped the hide and processed it, then trying it ourselves.

Akinoomaagewin also happens through using our intelligence in reflecting on why things are the way they are. For instance, Stephanie, a small but powerful elder with white hair, who I have known since I was young, taught me a lot about the identification of medicinal plants and how to use them. She taught me that mints, for example, can be identified by their square stems, opposite leaves, and smell. But in identifying plants and their uses, she also noted that some of this learning is not just memorization, it is also using your intelligence to understand what that plant's gift could be. Stephanie said to me, "So just look at the plants. You've got a good brain on your head. Think about why would it be that way? And what service

does it provide for that plant? And how does it help us because these plants are here to help us."[12]

In addition to observing and repeating what Gidinawemaaganinaanig do and reflecting upon their purposes, part of Akinoomaagewin is using our physical and spiritual intuition to learn. Making leather is a stinky and exhaustive process. Because our hides were not freshly harvested, we had to soak them in Water so they would soften and we could scrape off the excess meat. The smell of rotting meat, wet fur, and Fly larvae under the summer sun isn't exactly the loveliest smell (I can already smell the hides now), but we had to be careful and patient so as not to rip the hide. After the hide is de-meated, we strung it up to dry and then we began to scrape off the outer skin layer, which can take an entire day and a lot of shoulder strength. In every step of the leather-making process, I learned to be careful not to rip the hide through an intuitive process of feeling the hide with the hide and my scraper. As I scraped, I was able to feel where the hide resisted more and where it was more weak. Sometimes, I ripped holes in the hide, but I also learned where it was softer, so trial and error was also a part of our learning. This back-and-forth of feeling the hide was a dialogue between the Deer and me. Through listening to the hide, I learned not to scrape too aggressively, because I would rip the Deer. After this experience, I have reflected that rushing the process and working too aggressively is disrespectful of the Deer who give their lives so that we can have leather. To treat their flesh as an inconvenient task is disrespectful, but by taking my time and allowing the Deer spirit to guide me, I was honoring and respecting them.

---

[12] Ozhaawashko-dewe'iganikwe – Williams, Stephanie. Interviewed by Zaryn Prussia. Personal Dibaajimowin (storytelling). Stephanie's home, Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, June 23-24, 2022. All quotes throughout this paper belong to the same interview. All quotes have been lightly edited for clarity.

In modern terms, earning this kinetic and intuitive understanding is often referred to as "getting the flow of it". Ishkode, a master of Wild rice, Maple syrup, and Anishinaabe foods in general, is an example of someone who has attained this intuitive understanding of the land through Akinoomaagewin. While helping him at his homestead in the eastern part of the reservation, we took frequent breaks to escape the mosquitos and humid air outside. While we cooled by the fan and drank a can of soda, Ishkode talked with me at length about the art of harvesting Wild Rice:

> Most people think (ricing) it's a thing of brute strength, and it's not. It's balance and it's grace. If you got the balance and the grace, it's almost like you're just flowing through it. It's not the gorilla thing I see people do. So, you have two people in the boat, and the boat's sitting like this when you head out… and it's dragging a furrow into the bottom of the lake, and you're literally scrunching the rice outside as you go. Whereas when I do it, the canoe barely tips up (inaudible), and I just glide along. It's just me, so I'm starting out with maybe 300 pounds less than everyone is. It's less energy for me to pull because it's just my weight and I'm used to doing that.[13]

Ishkode's descriptions of grace and flow speak to how understanding the land is not just about using your head, it's about feeling through and with Aki, and in his case, with a pair of wooden rice knockers and a pole. When we engage in these respectful relationships with the land, we are recognizing the land as sentient, alive, and kin. Thus, we are actively practicing Mino-Bimaadiziwin. When Ishkode harvests Wild Rice, he is flowing with the rice and using his intuition to work with the grain, instead of against it. In working in this synergistic way, Ishkode is respecting the rice's life and homes, and in turn, the rice makes his job easier. Our relationships with Gidinawemaaganinaanig from Akinoomaagewin reflect our Anishinaabe

---

[13] Ishkode – Zornes, Simon. Interviewed by Zaryn Prussia. Personal Dibaajimowin (storytelling). Ishkode's homestead, Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, June 14, 2022. All quotes throughout this paper belong to the same interview. All quotes have been lightly edited for clarity.

values of Gwayakaadiziwin, balance, and Manaaji'idiwin, respect, and together they form part of Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

Because I chose to learn through Akinomaagewin, most of my time this summer was not spent sitting and doing interviews. Most of my time involved days of hard work, in contact with the land through gardening. While I listened to teachers and Aki, I also reflected on what I was hearing meant to me.

I think that learning is a lifelong process that never ends. As a young Oshkaabewis, I acknowledge that I still have a lot to learn about our ways. I recognize there are probably teachings that I have misunderstood, such as in my translations of Anishinaabe phrases or explanations of Anishinaabe concepts. What you are reading is not an ultimate statement about Mino-Bimaadiziwin or White Earth. It is, however, a significant moment in my growth as a student, teacher, and land steward. More importantly, this project has been an opportunity to look at the pressing issues of chronic disease, food insecurity, and forced dependence through a Mino-Bimaadiziwin-focused perspective.

Before sharing our story, I should acknowledge my own positionality in this project. I am a young, cis-gendered, and heterosexual Anishinaabe man from Gaa-waabaabiganikaag. Furthermore, I grew up middle class and have been privileged to not experience food insecurity or poverty. I acknowledge that my experience and perspective are limited, and that my words by no means represent the entirety of White Earth. But, as a community member of Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, I believe my own reflections have a place in this community-based project too. In this thesis, I have tried my best to stay true to my inner voice, while uplifting and prioritizing the voices of community elders. I have done so through my own carefulness and

through going over what I have written with them, and relying on their feedback to keep this project centered in our voices. I would also like to acknowledge that I am sharing Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin, which, depending on the teaching and individual, can be controversial. I include Anishinaabe knowledge in this dibaajimowin to stay authentic to our teachings and voices while also giving back to the Anishinaabe community, as this project is ultimately for us. I do, however, acknowledge that it won't only be Anishinaabe people reading this document. It is, after all, an honors thesis that will be available to anyone on the internet. Thus, I have worked to check with those who participated in this project to make sure that the sacred knowledge I share is appropriate to be shared with a wider audience.

Indaanawenjige – I Refuse

Historically, centering community needs and knowledge has not always been the goal for researchers, but it is to me. While I have always been interested in spending time with and learning from other communities, I feel that the pinnacle achievement of my career at Macalester should be dedicated to my community Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, and the countless elders and teachers who have taught me what I know. Indigenous scholars Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013), Shawn Wilson (2008), and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) have been influential in teaching me the importance of centering our community's desires, stories, and knowledge systems. In her book, *As We Have Always Done*, Simpson (2017) talks about her research on Anishinaabe liberation and education as contributing to what she calls the Radical Resurgence Project, which is a dream and a process that centers pre-colonial ways of being and knowing to manifest real-world alternatives to the colonial systems that dispossess and erase the bodies,

lives, and realities of colonized peoples. Simpson describes refusal of colonial systems as the very first step in the Radical Research Project:

> It begins from a place of refusal of colonialism and its current settler colonial structural manifestation. It refuses dispossession of both Indigenous bodies and land as the focal point of resurgent thinking and action. It continues the work of dismantling heteropatriarchy as a dispossessive force. It calls for the formation of networks of constellations of radical resurgent organizing as direct action within grounded normativities (our Indigenous realities) and against the dispossessive forces of capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy… I simply cannot see how Indigenous peoples can continue to exist as Indigenous if we are willing to replicate the logics of colonialism, because to do so is to actively engage in self-dispossession from the relationships that make us Indigenous in the first place (34-35).

As a student of anthropology, I have become all too familiar with the colonial logics within dominant society, academia, and anthropology. These logics include the separation between human beings and nature, the idea of singular and linear progress within society, the dissolution of non-European and Indigenous realities into social and cultural constructs, and the ultimate positioning of cartesian-based eurocentric knowledge and its perception of reality as the only truth. Peruvian anthropologist De la Cadena (2010), who has worked with Indigenous Quechua communities and Earth beings, discusses how modern politics and these colonial logics have worked to invalidate and erase our Indigenous realities, and the kin relationship between human beings and the land as a means to justify colonial legal systems and extractivism. She describes our alternative realities as making up part of a "pluriverse", which are the multiple and varying worlds that originate in each society. These pluriversal worlds consist of interweaving territories, physics, spiritual relationships, and ways of knowing and being. The pluriverse that De La Cadena identifies includes these territories and realities where the Anishinaabe people come from. We call our place in this "pluriverse" as Anishinaabewaki, which is a conjoining of the words Anishinaabe, "Human Being", and Aki, "the land". Anishinaabewaki is where

Anishinaabe and Aki are both united as one and everything, due to our familial, spiritual, physical, biological, and cosmic relationships. In writing this honors thesis with the goal for a "radical resurgence" of Mino-Bimaadiziwin, I want to speak from Anishinaabewaki, I want to speak from my heart. This writing is also an act of Survivance because we are refusing to have our stories and voices be submerged and erased. In writing this story, I refuse to perpetuate colonial logics. In writing this story, I refuse to create another ethnography for academia. In writing this story, I am exercising my sovereignty by choosing for this honors thesis to be an educational tool and a message to my nation Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, and to those who will listen to the call to return to gardening, and, ultimately, Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

Chapter 3: Zanagadoon onow Gaagige-aakoziwin miinawaa Bakadewin

The Problems of Chronic Illness and Hunger

By advocating for a return to gardening and our traditional relationships with the land, this research and the work of Extension seek to address the problems of chronic disease and food insecurity that are devastating our community. While listening to my auntie Lisa, the former director of Extension, we sat outside the college overlooking one of their gardens where she spoke passionately about the current health issues of food insecurity and chronic disease on White Earth,

> In February of 2020, we received a report from Hope University, and what they found was that our Tribal College had the highest food insecurity, home insecurity, and homelessness than all other surveyed two year universities in the country. Some of the questions they asked were: "did you miss a meal in the course of the day in the last 30 days, because you did not have access to food or money for food?" And they said yes. And it was the last question that really, excuse my language, but pissed me off. It was "did you lose weight in the last 30 days, because you did not have money for food or access to food?" And our students said yes! The average age of our students here is 32, and they have kids. So, if they're missing food, are their children? Some of the only meals that kids often do get is at school, which isn't always necessarily healthy… Why that pissed me off so bad was that over 20 years ago, when I was a young mom, I didn't have enough food in my home, either. I only had enough food to feed my children at the time, and if there was anything left over, then I would eat it. But if there wasn't anything left over, then I didn't eat. And 20 plus years later, we're in the same damn boat. To me, that's unacceptable.[14]

Lisa's words speak to the widespread issue of food insecurity on White Earth and the need for more local food options on the reservations. There is only one grocery store on the reservation, Bruggeman's Supervalu, which is located in Mahnomen, on the western side of the reservation. Most Anishinaabe people, however, live on the east side of the reservation in villages such as

---

[14] Wasey'wugikwe – Brunner, Lisa. Interviewed by Zaryn Prussia. Personal Dibaajimowin (storytelling). White Earth Tribal and Community College, Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, June 8, 2022. All quotes throughout this paper belong to the same interview. All quotes have been lightly edited for clarity.

Naytauwaush, Pine Point, White Earth, and Elbow Lake. According to data from White Earth Food Sovereignty Initiative (2020), the average distance to a grocery store round trip for community members is 60 miles. As a result of poverty and distant grocery stores, many Anishinaabe families are dependent on government food assistance programs, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Elderly Nutritional Program, and Commodities and affordable chains, like Walmart and Dollar General (Ibid.). Despite serious and substantial efforts by honorable Gaa-waabaabiganikaag Anishinaabeg, in the past 15 to 20 years, to improve the availability of healthy commodity foods and elder meals on White Earth lands, there is still a long way to go in making these services completely healthy. In general, these food programs and "big box" brands distribute processed, sugary, high-calorie foods with low nutritional value (Taillie et al. 2015). Because of the inaccessibility of healthy foods and dependence on food assistance programs, "big box" stores, and convenience stores, the White Earth community suffers severely from chronic diseases like diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and obesity (White Earth Food Sovereignty Initiative 2020). Lisa describes in detail the quality of food programs on the reservation:

> Let's look at the food quality that our elders and our children are receiving in the daycare right here next to campus… and then across the road is the Head Start program, and then you have the public school systems. Whatever the elders get is what our children are getting. And that's not food either. That's not nutritionally dense food. What they get comes out of a bag, bucket, box, or a can. It's highly preserved foods, and they can't really call them cooks, because they're not really cooking. All they're doing is opening crap, throwing it in an oven, throwing it in the pan, heating it up, and plopping it on a plate. That's not cooking. That's just prepping, just heating it up.
>
> It's not that I'm trying to knock that, because when you're hungry, you're going to eat whatever you have, but we need to be doing better in the level of food that's going out. Like with the elderly nutrition program, that food is not tailored to our elders' dietitian needs. I had a colleague come who happened to be visiting with her mom and dad. When the Meals on Wheels came, they got their elder meals delivered. She's like "Lisa, my mom couldn't eat any of it. It was a hot dog on a white bun with baked beans

> and fruit in syrup, canned fruit. She's diabetic. She can't eat that!"…But if our elders are hungry, and that's the only food they're gonna get, we're contributing to the horrific health disparities, and potentially, aiding in their quick departure from this world… So, we need to look at our food sovereignty as a tribe… There has to be some level of oversight here, so that we can determine what is being cooked and what is being delivered to feed our people. Because, all it's doing is contributing to the health disparities that we're the highest and the lowest that we do not want to be.

As Lisa says, unhealthy foods that come from government food assistance programs have contributed to extreme health disparities for Anishinaabe people. Anishinaabeg on White Earth live with high rates of malnutrition, diabetes, and obesity. According to Indian Health Service (2013), the leading causes of death for Native Americans were heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. These statistics tell us that a significant number of Anishinaabe do not have access to healthy food and are living with chronic disease which is slowly killing us.

The inability of White Earth Anishinaabeg to access healthy food options aligns with what Black activist Karen Washington (Washington n.d.) calls "food apartheid". In contrast to "food desert", food apartheid recognizes that food insecurity is the result of structural racism. The word apartheid recalls the racist apartheid system of South Africa where white settler-colonial governments systematically segregated black natives and white settlers, and created laws to prevent black natives from owning land and restrict their movement among other things. This apartheid led to mass poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and disease (Stray Dog Institute 2022). While White Earth is no stranger to this reality of food apartheid, in this writing, I have referred to it as "food desert" because it was the term used by people I interviewed.

Lisa's words and the statistics from the White Earth Food Sovereignty Initiative show that our community is not physically healthy. In other words, we are not living well. But, Extension's staff are working hard to provide community members with healthy alternatives

through distributing seeds, plants, and produce, hosting food literacy workshops, and providing the community with a space to garden. In working to make our people healthy, the Extension team is working to restore Mino-Bimaadiziwin, well-being, to our community. When community members, such as myself, participate in Extension's seasonal camps and programing, we are also restoring relationships that are fundamental to Mino-Bimaadiziwin. Thus, I have chosen to center Mino-Bimaadiziwin in this paper. In working with my community members and the land, in addition to literature review, I have come to understand that these community-wide health concerns come from our disconnection from Mino-Bimaadiziwin, which stems from the violent and traumatic acts of settler colonialism, assimilation, and extractivism.

Chapter 4: Wiisiniwin, Aakoziwin, Onjidawin

Food, Sickness, and Sovereignty

Gaa-pi-izhigoziyang Gaa-waabaabiganikaag – When We Moved to White Earth

White Earth's current issues of food insecurity, chronic disease, and poverty are rooted in a deep settler-colonial past and the disruption of Mino-Bimaadiziwin. In 1867, the chiefs from the Mississippi band of Anishinaabe signed a treaty with the United States government for the creation of the White Earth reservation. Before the creation of White Earth, our people had been pressured and coerced to give up more and more land in the form of treaties for decades, starting in the early 1800s. In signing the treaty, the chiefs of the Mississippi band hoped to secure a permanent homeland for our people as well as medical, educational, financial, and nutritional support for the future (Meyer 1994). Our ancestors signed treaties because as Anishinaabe bands we were formidable enough to be treated as sovereign by the United States. This recognition of our sovereignty meant we were recognized as a self-governing nation with our own land base and jurisdiction. Lisa defines this term:

> When we think about the term sovereignty, that applies to nations. We're about to celebrate our treaty day, Saturday, the 154th celebration of our treaty with the United States. Countries don't go into treaties, unless it's with another country, another sovereign. When we think about what sovereignty is, it's because we have our own governance system, we have our own land base, this was our land, all of it was our land. So, our treaties, even though it was kind of forced, we were still a force to be reckoned with, and that's why the United States recognized us as sovereign nations.

I want to recognize that White Earth maintains this nation-to-nation type of sovereignty and that our treaties are important pieces of our self-determination. But in this work, I want to go beyond politics of recognition and think about sovereignty as practicing free will. I want to suggest a

more active type of sovereignty, where self-governance is not necessarily based on recognition by colonial states, but enabled and contingent upon a community's choice to feed and support its people through the land, and more generally through Mino-Bimaadiziwin. I will now discuss how colonization, subsequent assimilation, and the disruption of our traditional food systems have undermined our sovereignty and created the health concerns on the reservation today.

While Anishinaabe chiefs hoped to secure a permanent land base for our people, the goal of the United States was to open more ceded lands up for European settlement and resource extraction, particularly our forests (Ibid.). In addition to this, the United States government hoped to colonize and assimilate us, in other words to make us "self-sustaining by means of agriculture, and the adoption of the habits of civilized life".[15] The United States envisioned the Anishinaabe people transitioning from our seasonal migrational ways of life to one based on market-based farming, fundamentally changing the way Anishinaabe fed themselves and related with Aki, and ultimately undermining our own sovereignty. The late Andy Favorite, a White Earth historian and storyteller, explains the settler-colonial motivation behind the creation of White Earth:

> The idea is referenced as "The Great Experiment", and the Great Experiment was to Christianize us, civilize us, and make us agrarian. And once they did it here at White Earth, they were going to replicate it on other reservations.… White Earth was earmarked as late as the 1840s to be the answer to the Chippewa problem in northern Minnesota. The plan was to concentrate all the Michigan bands, all the Minnesota bands and all the Wisconsin bands here at White Earth, as early as the 1840s.[16]

---

[15] See U.S. Department of State. "Treaty With The Chippewa Of The Mississippi, 1867." Signed March 19, 1867. *Oklahoma State University Libraries Tribal Treaties Database*. https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-chippewa--of-the-mississippi-1867-0974

[16] See Favorite, Andy. n.d. "Andy Favorite and Larry Aitken on Ojibwe Blood Quantum at White Earth Tribal College." University of Pennsylvania. Accessed April 12, 2023. https://ojibwearchive.sas.upenn.edu/seven-directions/ningaabiianong/blood-quantum.

The United States government selected the region of White Earth for the removal of Minnesota Anishinaabe precisely due to its location between the great plains of the west and the northwoods of the east. The soils of the great plains and especially of the Red River valley, which cover the western reservation, have some of the most nutritious and moist soils in North America. The United States government believed that the presence of both the northwoods and the prairie soils would provide a site for Anishinaabe people to transition from a migrational life in the woods to a sedentary life of farming. To encourage this transition, the US promised the Anishinaabe people infrastructure like a grist mill, saw mill, housing, schools, medical aid, food annuities, farming tools, seeds, and money (Meyer 1994).

When White Earth was created, some families did opt to practice market farming, but most preferred to form villages around the abundance of Maple and Birch trees, swamps, lakes, and Wild Rice beds in the eastern half of White Earth (Ibid.). Such decisions spoke to our attachment to our traditional food systems, but also the reliability of our traditional way of life. As Anishinaabe people, our traditional food-security came from our rich geographic knowledge of seasonal food systems and our balanced relationships with all of creation. We understood that sources of life fluctuate, so we always had multiple sources of food to depend on. While volunteering at Extension, I also spoke with Extension supervisor Diane McArthur, a descendant of early German immigrants who grew up on White Earth and also a former health worker on the reservation. Diane described how through our dynamic food systems we were able to thrive:

> I think that the people (Dakota, Anishinaabe, etc.) who lived here before knew that the seasons were variable. Some years, the rice would be awesome. Some years there wasn't rice, like the last few years we really haven't had much rice to harvest. They grew the

> Corn and they harvested the rice. There was an either-or… It would go back and forth. They always made sure that there was something, so they grew different things and they harvested or gathered different things so that there was always something. So, last year, those Blueberries were not plentiful, but the Raspberries were awesome. So, you just look at what Mother Nature gives you.[17]

Thus, despite forced removal and concentration, early Anishinaabe people on White Earth were able to continue practicing our traditional foodways because they were so secure. According to an early resident of White Earth, "There was plenty of Wild Rice in the lakes, and ducks, geese, and prairie chickens were also plentiful. The lakes were filled with many varieties of fish. The first years were quite plentiful, and also elk, moose, bear, muskrats, and rabbits. Nay-bon-ash-kung, one of the chiefs, who died in 1873, killed the first elk".[18]

In continuing our traditional foodways, we had no need to farm and therefore refused the United States' goal to assimilate. In exercising this refusal, we were also exercising our sovereignty as a nation, sovereignty that was rooted in our abundant and reliable food systems. While listening to Lisa, she identified our traditional food systems to be integral to our sovereignty:

> To me, for any country, any nation, or any state, or any tribe, to really be truly, fully sovereign, is to ensure that you have your own food system, you have a secured food system. Prior to colonization, we had that. We lived effectively from the land, we hunted, we fished, we trapped, we gardened, we had our traditional foods, we had Wild Cice, we had our Maple syrup, we had all of these seasonal things. Oftentimes we were being referred to as nomads. We weren't. We didn't follow where the food went, we knew where the food was, and we went and set up camp accordingly. When you look at the definition of nomads, it says that you are just wandering about. Well, we would have died if that were the case [chuckles]. I don't think any civilization that's ever been here

---

[17] McArthur, Diane. Interviewed by Zaryn Prussia. Personal Dibaajimowin (storytelling). White Earth Tribal and Community College, Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, June 1, 2022. All quotes throughout this paper belong to the same interview. All quotes have been lightly edited for clarity

[18] See RootsWeb. n.d. "History of the White Earth Reservation." RootsWeb. https://sites.rootsweb.com/~mnbecker/ch18.php.

> was ever considered nomadic. I think that's just a social deconstructive term to minimize our fabric of our resiliency, of our intelligence, of our way of knowing and being, because we lived in solidarity with all of creation. So, we had a secure food system and that's also indicative of sovereignty.

As Lisa says, we were sovereign because we had a secure food system that was based on living "in solidarity with all of creation". In offering our tobacco and taking only what we needed, we did not take the gifts of the land for granted and earned her respect and compassion. Such an idea of sovereignty differs from Western notions of sovereignty which are focused on treaties and mutual recognition between states. Thus, despite relocation, concentration, and coercion, Mino-Bimaadiziwin allowed us to refuse assimilation and maintain our sovereignty.

Our refusal to assimilate did not come without increasing pressures from the United States. For example, the United States sought to limit our foodways through game and harvesting laws. Under these laws, Anishinaabe people were and still can be arrested for hunting "out of season" when trying to feed our families. Nun and Anthropologist Marie Inez Hilger in a report on the condition of White Earth families states:

> A woman, thirty-two years of age, asked us to trail her along a new path some distance into the woods to see the rack on which she had dried the venison we had seen in her home. In a remote spot in the woods she had cleared a small place of underbrush and erected a rack in the old fashioned manner. She had split branches of trees into slabs and by means of basswood fiber had tied them into a framework. The Corners of the framework were resting in the crotches of four saplings about two feet from the ground. Her reason for having the rack deep in the woods was to hide it from the white men. "They take us to court for shooting deer. I was worried they might see the smoke. Some of them are simply laying for (targeting) Indians!" (1938, 140).

Furthermore, the federal Indian agents restricted our ability to travel and harvest outside of the reservation. Lisa shares that we could even be killed for crossing the reservation border:

> When we were put on the reservations, we weren't really allowed to leave here. The elders often refer to this as the concentration camps, our reservations. If our people wanted to leave the reservation, they had to get permission from the Indian agent, a

> permission slip. They could determine if you could leave or not. Keep in mind, we went to where the food was. Well, our berry patch is Lake George, it's north of here quite a distance, a couple hours drive away was another huge berry patch. It's there off the reservation where these berry patches are. For blueberries, that's one of our main staples. If that agent decided to give you the slip to get off the reservation or not, you couldn't. Sometimes you hear in dumb sitcoms "oh, they're off the reservation". What that meant is that if we were caught off the reservation at that time, we could be shot and killed on sight. But it didn't matter if we had a slip or not, either way a dead Indian was a dead Indian, because that was the goal anyways, it was to exterminate our people.

The fact that the Ansihinaabe could be killed outside of the reservation for trying to feed ourselves shows that the interest of the United States wasn't actually to incorporate or help Anishinaabe people adapt to American society as our treaty said, it was to ultimately to colonize our lands and erase us through murder and assimilation.

In response to these restrictions, our people of course continued to refuse death and assimilation. The late Lyman Roberts, a community member, elder, educator, and veteran writes how he and his family still depended on the seasonal round:

> My grandmother and I, along with Zach and Amy Rock, Dan and Amelia Blair, Jennie Finday, John Gorge, Francis Bongo and family would head north to Bass lake to camp all summer to fish and pick blue blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, high bush cranberries, and the elders would hunt. In the fall we would move to Basswood Lake to rice camp where we also harvested and processed the Wild Rice for winter use. In the fall we would go back to Pine Point for school. My dad and I would head for the Red River Valley to pick potatoes (Carter 1990).[19]

The continuation of our traditional foodways speaks to the survivance of our people. Our community members have not given up, and many, such as Stephanie and Ishkode, continue to refuse assimilation.

---

[19] This quote comes from a hard-to-find anthology of the Pine Point and Ponsford area. The book was briefly lent to me by Indigenous studies professor and relative Shaawano Uran from the University of Bemidji. It contained no page numbers.

Aanji-wiisiniwin – A Changing Diet

Thanks to the refusal of our ancestors, we still have our traditional foodways today, but that does not mean that our traditional way of life did not suffer. When the United States saw that their treaty provisions were not enough to coax Anishinaabe people into farming, and when European settlers wanted more of Anishinaabe land while lumber companies desired our old-growth trees, the United States decided to pass *An Act for the relief and civilization of the Chippewa Indians in the State of Minnesota,* better known as the Nelson Act of 1889. Under the Nelson Act, communal lands on most Anishinaabe reservations in Minnesota would be divided up and allotted to Anishinaabe families to create farmsteads, while unclaimed land would be sold to settlers for a cheap price. Paradoxically, this act prevented the forest from being allotted right away because of its value in timber. So Congress later passed the 1904 Steenerson and Rider Acts which allowed Anishinaabe people to not only receive a forest lot but also sell their trees to timber companies (Meyer 1994).

Through widespread land fraud, European settlers and lumber companies managed to purchase and colonize most of our land. Anishinaabe people were confused and shocked as they watched Europeans cut their forests down, clear their prairies, and move next door. In 1910, Warren K. Moorehead, a scholar and a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners, came to White Earth to investigate the land fraud and hear the accounts of Anishinaabe people. Moorehead was an advocate for the return of Anishinaabe land and reported some of the predatory practices that white settlers and government agents used to fraud Anishinaabe out of their land. Moorehead recounts “It is sad to note that in a hundred or more instances the Indians were purposely made drunk and their lands taken away from them while under the influence of

liquor. Many of the Indians do not remember what kind of papers they signed, whether deeds or mortgages, or whether any papers were signed at all" (1910, 74). Another way in which settlers defrauded Anishinaabe people of their land was through threats of violence and imprisonment. Such was the case with Grace Rock, an Anishinaabe woman, who refused to sell her land and was told by a settler that "if she will not sell, we will throw her into the lake." (Ibid., 78).

The land fraud of White Earth was so great, that by 1910 less than twenty percent of the reservation remained under Anishinaabe control (Meyer 1994). Without access to land, Anishinaabe families became squatters on our own reservation. Many families had no choice but to live in tents outside of local government agencies and later tar-paper shacks, cramped dwellings with no insulation against deadly winter temperatures. Inez Hilger (1938) found that out of the 8000 Anishinaabe living on White Earth, less than 400 owned land while most were homeless or renters. Without access to the land, Anishinaabe people were starving and left with very few options to feed ourselves. A local catholic priest reported to Moorehead that "There was more suffering than ever before in this territory; that Indians died that winter, that many of the Indians were compelled to hunt rabbits, not for pleasure, but from necessity, and that practically all the rabbits on the reservation were killed" (1910, 85).

Starving, the only places we had to go were government agencies where we were distributed foods known as "commodities". Inez Hilger writes, "Some old Indians gave as the reason for their removal into the village the need of being closer to the source of supplies. Their old sources, hunting and fishing, were no longer available to them; the new ones, those supplying annuities and per-capita payments, were found at the agency" (1938, 17). Our new dependency on the United States meant that we could no longer support ourselves through our

traditional foodways. In essence, we had lost what made us sovereign, our ability to live off of the land.

These government commodity foods were low in nutritional value, and high in calories and saturated fats. Some examples of government commodity foods were bleached flour, refined sugar, sugary beverages, lard, Corn syrup, canned meat, and cheese (Warne and Wescott 2019). Such unhealthy foods combined with starvation made the Anishinaabe people especially vulnerable to deadly infectious diseases. The most devastating of these diseases was tuberculosis, a bacterial disease of the lungs. This disease spread throughout the cramped homes of Anishinaabe people and killed many. In fact, the devastation due to tuberculosis and infectious diseases was so severe that federal officials converted boarding schools into hospitals and sanatoriums for the sick. Parents died and children were left orphaned, traumatizing future generations. In remembering these times of sickness from her great great grandmother Oona, Ignatia Broker an author from White Earth writes:

> Oona's heart broke many times when she saw the faces of the young ones. Many of the children had swollen necks from infections of the tubercular germ, and they easily caught the diseases of the lungs. The change of diet left them with no way to fight the germs of the strangers who were dominant in the land of the forest and lakes. It was good that the rulers of the land built hospitals and placed nurses and doctors on the reservations, but even they could not stem the tide of the alien diseases. The government nurses said in tones of disgust, "Soap and Water is what is needed. Dirt and disease go together." But soap and Water could not replace the diet that had kept the Ojibway people strong. The game and the wild food with its natural strength was not in theirs anymore. They had been replaced by the salt pork, bacon, and beans. (1983, 119).

As revealed by Broker's traumatic story, our declining health is directly linked to the introduction of commodity foods and the disruption of our traditional foodways.

Our foodways did decline, but I also want to emphasize that this does not mean they disappeared forever. Many families refused to ever give them up. While helping to plant the

Tribal College's garden, I spent a lot of time with elder Bob Shimek or Zhaashiigid Nooding (Pissing in the Wind), the head gardener and educator at Extension who has been involved with food sovereignty since the 1990s. Bob is a big elder with wiry gray hair. I have known him since I was a kid because he ran a sweat lodge at my home in White Earth. While at the Tribal College, we did an interview in his office, which reflects the dual nature of Extension's work with the land and with higher learning. Shelves are filled with jars of seeds and papers. Dried sage and other herbs hang above office cabinets, and student crafts in the making sit scattered on the table next to office supplies. When speaking with Bob, I asked him to share his thoughts about food sovereignty on the reservation:

> For a long time, before the coming of modern industrial agriculture, there was food safety, security, and sovereignty. I think that those three words complement each other. But by and large, as consumers on the global scale, we sold out to the large corporate interests. In other words, take your paycheck, or take your EBT (SNAP funds) and head on down to Walmart, and give them the control, give them the access in terms of who's got a safe and secure source of food, and who doesn't. So, I won't say I got it started (food sovereignty), because it was here. But I think it got greatly diminished, probably starting in the late 70s on up through the 80s, and 90s. We sold out, a lot of people sold out their food sovereignty. When I was a kid around here, cripe, a lot of people gardened, including my own family, everybody had a big garden. Like I said, I think there was a turning point.[20]

Bob's words speak to the fact that despite the game laws, the boarding schools, allotment, and the arrival of government commodities, many Anishinaabe families still gardened before the 1970s. But as Bob mentions, along the line something happened when Anishinaabe people

[20] Zhaashiigid Nooding – Shimek, Bob. Interviewed by Zaryn Prussia. Personal Dibaajimowin (storytelling). White Earth Tribal and Community College, Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, June 17, 2022. All quotes throughout this paper belong to the same interview. All quotes have been lightly edited for clarity.

“sold out” our traditional foodways. While speaking with Ishkode, he talked about how during the rice harvest in the fall many families used to come to the rice mills to sell harvested rice:

> When I first seen that place, Indians would line up for a mile in either direction, waiting to talk to the rice mill guy and drop off their rice or sell their rice to someone. The tribe wouldn't even buy it on the lake, they’d just go to the rice mill and buy it right there sometimes. Then as I grew older, the line got shorter and shorter until finally it was just the tribe pulling in with all these trailers full of rice instead of families.

So what made Anishinaabe people so disconnected from our foodways? Well, as Anishinaabe people found it increasingly difficult to practice our original foodways, there was increasing pressure by the United States to switch to food distribution programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) or “commods”. Moreover, during the 1970s, affordable big-box and convenience stores expanded across the United States where Anishinaabe people could use their SNAP funds. According to a study by the White Earth Food Sovereignty Initiative (2020), nineteen percent of Anishinaabe people on White use SNAP, seven percent use commods, and fifty percent of White Earth members purchase their food from “big box” stores with the majority going to Walmart. So, today I would say that most of the diet on White Earth comes from unhealthy outside sources and not directly from the land on White Earth.

Similar to the post-allotment tuberculosis epidemic, the same pattern between unhealthy diets and disease is causing epidemics of chronic disease in White Earth today. Now, thirty percent of Anishinaabe people on White Earth are living with diabetes which is four times the

percentage of White Americans.[21] Diane elaborated on the epidemic of diabetes on the reservation:

> When I got out of college, I went into long-term care, and then I went into clinical dietetics working with the diabetes project, and eventually the dialysis unit in White Earth… I left the clinical dietetics, mostly because I became frustrated with the pharmaceutical approach to everything, knowing that we're just treating the symptoms of what we call chronic disease, when it really goes back to inflammation, which is coming from our food sources or environmental toxins… I would see these patients, especially the ones that had what we call a type two diabetes, which is really insulin resistance. And they were young, a lot of them were in their 20s. I was seeing some who were in their teens. I would see their labs, so I would see decreased kidney function in these people, and knowing I work in the dialysis unit, and these people are in their 30s and they have decreased kidney function. So, I'm thinking by the time these people are in their 40s, they're probably going to have very limited kidney function. I knew what we were doing wasn't helping people. We're not treating the problem, we're treating the symptom. We just continue to give these patients pharmaceuticals and we manage, that's the term they use, "manage", we manage it with pharmaceuticals and eventually, they decline slowly, and eventually they pass from this chronic disease.

Here, Diane brings up the pervasiveness of chronic disease in our nation and notes the pharmaceutical limits to healing Anishinaabe people with diabetes and failing organs. The origin of diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and cancer has to do with what we are eating. If we really want to heal from these diseases, we need to return to a healthy diet. This is why the work of Extension has focused so much on food literacy and why Gaa-waabaabiganikaag Anishinaabeg have been working hard to improve the nutritional quality of commodity foods and elder meals on White Earth lands. However, despite the efforts at Extension and those working in food programs, the statistics from the White Earth Sovereignty Initiative show that we still have a long way to go.

---

[21] See White Earth Nation. n.d. "White Earth Diabetes Project." White Earth Nation. Accessed April 30, 2023. https://whiteearth.com/divisions/health/services.

Unhealthy foods have practically become part of Anishinaabe culture. This summer I went to the 154th annual White Earth powwow, a celebration of the anniversary of when Anishinaabe people first arrived on our reservation. The White Earth Powwow is the largest celebration on the reservation. There you can always expect multi-colored dancers in regalia, booming drums and songs, a charismatic MC (Master of Ceremonies), and of course food. While walking around the reservation, I took note of all food and beverage stands and what type of food they were serving. Of the fifteen food and beverage stands I counted that day, eleven served frybread, cheese fries, burgers, and sugary drinks, all of which are contributors to obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. I only found three locations that served healthy food and drinks including Watermelon cups, chef salad, Wild Rice soup, and sugar-free teas. The sheer disparity between healthy options and unhealthy options at the powwow speaks to the reality of unhealthy diets on the reservation and how even local vendors can contribute to our own health disparities. Because we have lived with these deadly foods for so long, foods such as fry bread have practically become part of our culture. Ishkode and I spoke a little bit about this:

> Zaryn: For my research I was going around the powwow looking at all the foods that they're selling there and most of it was just unhealthy stuff.
>
> Ishkode: Yeah. Me and __ were talking about that. Our children shouldn't be arguing about whose mother makes the best frybread, they should be arguing about whose grandmother finishes the best rice. Because literally our bodies are made for that food. Like at Mericare, the Cancer wing over there, when someone has had too much cancer and there's really no digestive system left they can still feed them a weak Wild Rice soup and their body will absorb it even without a digestive tract. It’s just that familiar to your body, you can still get nutrients from it.

Ishkode speaks to the healthiness of our Wild Rice. I have learned that the foods that we originally ate are gifts from the Creator and Mother Earth. So if we want to return to a healthy state, we need to return to our traditional diets. Bob reflect on this:

> One time there was this one old timer; he said Indians in this here western Great Lakes region used to subsist annually on two to three-hundred different types of wild foods. And that's everything, from all the different kinds of fish, and Rabbits, and Deers, and Elks, and Mooses, and there used to be Caribou; there was all this stuff. This was pre-colonial, before the coming of the white man. To the things that grow on the Water, that grow in the Water; people always think about Wild Rice, but there's lots of other wild food out there in that Water that's plant based, that's not Wild Rice, that we're not taking care of that like we're supposed to; as well as all that green vegetative stuff, and the berries, all the different kinds of berries. He put all that together and he's saying there's two to three-hundred different types of wild and indigenous foods that we used to live on. And he said it was naturally organic. Season to season, you did these different kinds of foods and people were incredibly healthy. He said there was a time where it was not uncommon for old people to go way up in the late 80s and 90s, even 100 years old, and still be self-sufficient; they didn't need an old people's home or somebody to take care of them. Their body functions, they were able to do it on their own.

As Bob points out, these traditional foods were what kept us healthy and helped us to live long lives, but today the average lifespan of Native Americans is 71.8 years,[22] the lowest compared to all other ethnicities in the United States. This is linked to our diets. If we want to heal from the epidemics of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, we as a community need to create healthier food systems, which in the case of sovereignty, means procuring this food not from a supermarket, but from the land. According to Lisa:

> Our food isn't a thing, it’s a spiritual being. That's what Earl and Kathy always talked about, that our food is medicine. Now think about what people are eating. They’re eating food that’s not food. It’s fake food… Our food is a medicine because our food is a spiritual being. So when people are eating fast foods or eating all of these highly processed things, is it really food by the time they're done with it? So what are we feeding not not just our body, but what are we feeding our spirit?

---

[22] See NICOA. 2022. “CDC Study Shows Lower Life Expectancy for Natives.” NICOA - National Indian Council on Aging. April 21, 2022. https://www.nicoa.org/cdc-study-shows-lower-life-expectancy-for-natives/.

As Lisa highlights, our food is a spirit. This all goes back to Mino-Bimaadiziwin. When we got our food through the land, we were engaging in a relationship and recognizing the spirit of our foods through practices of offering, prayer, and song. However, when we eat processed foods, that relationship is absent. We don't know where that food came from and we don't know who the spirit of that food is, if there even is one.

As a nation, we need to get back to our traditional foodways now. The community members I spoke with expressed not only concerns about our health as a community, but for the future of White Earth nation and the vulnerable position we are in as being dependent on government food-assistance programs and convenience stores. As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States' food system is not as secure as many might think. When the pandemic arrived in the United States in March of 2020, food insecurity rose from just eleven percent in 2018 to thirty-eight percent (Kakaei et al. 2022). Impacting these numbers were rising unemployment, and disruptions in the international food supply chain because of covid-restrictions and lockdowns (Ibid.). People were also buying up all the food in grocery stores and leaving them barren. Food was not only becoming too expensive, it had reached the point where there was no food at all. As a community member and Extension supervisor, Lisa witnessed first-hand the food shortages on White Earth during the pandemic: "When COVID occurred, what COVID did was expose how extremely vulnerable and weak the United States' food system is…Right now, we are seeing a massive increase in food cost… When COVID actually occurred, I was seeing food going off the shelves, and that freaked me out." Because of increasing food insecurity and the dire situation of the reservation, Lisa and the Extension team have already arrived at the conclusion that food literacy and food sovereignty are necessary for

the continued survival of our community and for solving the issues of chronic disease and food insecurity. Diane elaborated on the goals of Extension and the unreliability of government food programs:

> Food sovereignty is really what our goal is, so that we are able to have our own seeds here, produce our own food, and feed our people, so that we're not reliant upon outside sources. Because if you look at those food boxes they were sending up during COVID, it was just all kinds of processed food. People can't rely on that, just like we can't rely on the commodity foods. I don't think we can rely on the SNAP program. We need to be able to rely on each other within our community, or even the outlying people around us. Because if something major happens, the federal government's not going to save us. We need to take care of ourselves. People have gotten so reliant on that, our whole culture has become reliant on that. From the people who are in the projects to farmers, they're all reliant on that too. People think, "Well, I'm not a welfare", no, we all are on some type of welfare. If you look at the way our government works, we all are in some way.

The college campus pantry provides a healthier organic food source for community members compared to government food assistance or corporate options. Diane and Lisa's words speak to the issue of food insecurity at a national level. She suggests the importance of identifying our own food sources and growing our own food to become food secure and create independence from our reliance on unstable food systems. Bob also described his concerns about food security:

> How secure is your source of food? How secure is all that stuff down at the Walmart? I don't know. I think we're seeing more and more the vulnerabilities of the whole supply chain, including food… All of a sudden, something's not available or maybe there's a gap in something. Talking about security, look at what this avian flu did to poultry. One, it sent things to an even higher price than they are already. But I think about my poor old cat at home, his name is Wheeze. I had a hell of a time finding canned cat food. I only give him half a can a day. I don't give him the whole thing, he just gets half. But, he pesters me for that half a can every morning. He will not leave me alone until he gets his half a can of canned cat food. All of a sudden, I go to the store and that shelf is bare. And all they say is, "well, we've got it ordered, we've been trying to get it." So, it's not just us as humans, it's affecting lots of things that we care about. For sovereignty, I think you got to talk about safety and you gotta talk about security. If we don't start taking back our own power, about our food, there's gonna be a time where maybe things get really scarce.

Bob points out again that food is not always available, and that for people on White Earth that scarcity appears to be increasing. The resources that make the modern world go round are dwindling, and if governments are unwilling to find sustainable solutions, the burden of solving the problem comes upon our shoulders as community members. So what should we do then? Bob adds:

> Some would say, one of the most radical things you can do in these times is plant a garden, plant a big garden that's going to meet your food needs for a good chunk of the year. So it seems like a stretch. Usually we associate radicalism with protests or demonstrations, but I have a tendency to agree with those folks who say, the most radical thing we can do is, "right now let's plant a garden". Because it takes back our power over our food, systems, sources, supplies, safety, and also disempowers the big corporate industrial giant that controls so much of our food at this point.

Having control over our own diets and food systems means having control over our health and subsequently our lives. When the United States government restricted our food systems, they were restricting our sovereignty as a nation. By becoming dependent on them, we had to gradually accept more and more of their laws, legislation, and authority. On the wall of Extension there's a poster of Vandana Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist. In bold font the poster quotes Shiva's groundbreaking book *Earth Democracy* (2005), "If they control seed, they control food. They know it, it's strategic. It's more powerful than bombs, it's more powerful than guns. This is the best way to control the world." In speaking about seed, Shiva comments how corporations and governments control the world's food supply and thus control everyone. We all need to eat. What would you give up so that you can eat? How about millions of acres of land? – 1867 Mississippi Chippewa treaty; how about your traditional form of government? – 1934 Indian Reorganization Act; how about control over your legal system? – 1953 Public law 280; how about accepting blood quantum? – 1961 MCT constitution. Because we do not have

control of our own food systems, our nation resembles more of a ward of the government than a truly sovereign nation. That was of course by design, but if we truly want our sovereignty back, we need to refuse the unhealthy foods that are being fed to us and instead restore our traditional food systems.

Aanimiziiwigamigoon – "Places of Suffering": Boarding Schools

I would be remiss if I did not discuss boarding schools. The United States attacked our traditional way of life through laws, legislation, and concentration, but boarding schools are perhaps the most traumatic event in White Earth's history. Often associated with boarding school superintendent Richard Pratt's infamous phrase "Kill the Indian, Save the Man", the goal of boarding schools was to eradicate Indigenous people by death through assimilation.

The first boarding school in the State of Minnesota, St. Benedict Missionary, was actually built in 1871 within the White Earth reservation (Gunderson 2021a). Soon after, many more boarding schools sprang up throughout the state of Minnesota. In an attempt to assimilate us, missionaries and government officials coerced parents or kidnapped Anishinaabe children and sent them to these boarding schools, sometimes hundreds of miles away, separating children from their parents and homelands. While having to live without their family, children suffered emotional, physical, and sexual abuse from teachers, nuns, and other school officials for using their language and practicing their spirituality and traditions (Ibid.). The violence of such acts cannot be understated. As Anishinaabe people, we have always drawn life and understood who we are in relation to our language, spirituality, family, and the land. But when Anishinaabe children were ripped away from their parents, they were deprived of their family and homeland,

they were deprived of love. When we are cut off from our relations, we lose ourselves and fall out of balance.

This imbalance has been called historical trauma, which the University of Minnesota describes as "cumulative emotional and psychological wounds that are carried across generations".[23] Because of the trauma of boarding schools, many of the elders who had attended them had either forgotten their traditions or were too afraid to pass them on. Our historical trauma has not only led to intergenerational cycles of substance abuse, suicide, and domestic violence, it has also led to a continued disconnection from our ancestors, families, and of course a disconnection from Aki. Diane talks about how today many Anishinaabe people have been disconnected from the land: "It used to be that everybody lived their culture. It was what you did every day. By taking that away from people, it makes us all kind of the same. We're all the same as we're human beings, but by taking away that culture, they're removed from having that relationship we have with the Earth." It is critical to talk about this disconnection from the land in terms of Mino-Bimaadiziwin. If we are unable to recognize that we have a relationship with the land, and if we are unable to engage with the land in any meaningful way, then we are unable to to treat the land with any recognition or respect as a living being.

In conclusion, Anishinaabe people traditionally lived in reciprocal, respectful, and balanced relationships with the land which is what we refer to as Mino-Bimaadiziwin or good living. Mino-Bimaadiziwin allowed us to be sovereign because by living in this way, we refused

---

[23] See University of Minnesota. 2020. "Historical Trauma and Cultural Healing." University of Minnesota. 2020. https://extension.umn.edu/trauma-and-healing/historical-trauma-and-cultural-healing#what-is-historical-trauma%3F-378610.

assimilation and continued our traditional ways even while living on a reservation. But, the United States used a combination of game and harvesting laws, border patrol, land fraud, and boarding schools to attack our traditional relationships with the land and disconnect us from the land herself, ultimately diminishing our original sovereignty with Aki. But, the fact that I was working with Anishinaabe gardeners this summer means that Mino-Bimaadiziwin is still here. We just need to embrace it.

Chapter 5: Giwani-bimaadizimin

We are Living in Imbalance

Ogii-wanishkwetoonaawaa i'iw Gimino-Bimaadiziwininaan –

Disruption of Mino-Bimaadiziwin

I have discussed how colonization, surveillance, allotment, and boarding schools have disrupted Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin. But in this chapter, I will discuss how extractivism not only limited the ability of land to provide but also constituted an act of genocide against the land and therefore against us.

Before 1910, that is before deforestation, the forests and prairies of White Earth looked very different than they do now. Our forests in Minnesota were noteworthy for the massive stands of centuries-old Red and White Pine that grew well above 100 feet with perhaps some reaching past 150 feet. J.W. Nunn, an early settler, who visited the village of Pine Point in southeast White Earth, commented on the state of the old forests and logging practices in the 1890s:

> Being very fond of natural forest scenery, what a wonderful sight greeted our wondering eyes everywhere from the Otter Tail river (before home of the ottertail band of pillager Ojibwe) to our destination, what marvelous natural grandeur of virgins forests of White Pine and Norway. Also great stretches of the meek and lowly jack pine were in evidence, and this, together with pine-balm ladder air that has so often proved so invigorating and healing in nature to the great joy of many invalids who have chanced this way (As quoted in Carter).[24]

These forests were our relatives and, as land stewards, we worked to maintain our ecosystems and create balance in the forest through controlled burns (Boerigter 2022). We knew not to burn

[24] See footnote on page 35

too much, and only burned to create opportunities for trees like aspen, raspberries, and other early-successional species to appear in the ashes. When we took from the land we sang songs and made offerings. The falling of a tree, especially one with hundreds of years of growth, was no light matter. However, because the Steener and the Rider Acts authorized the purchase of the land's timber resources, timber companies flooded into our reservation, and by 1910 all of the forests in White Earth had been completely cut over (Meyer 1994). J.W. Nunn goes on to describe the historic logging of White Earth:

> Those were the palmy days of the old-time typical lumberjack when all logging was done by man and horse power…Their methods of removing the timber was simply by the axe and saw crew, the skidders and skidding teams who put the logs on the skid ways, then the four horse drivers and heaving logging sleds which, on their iced roads would haul from 5 to 10 thousand feet, depending on condition and smoothness of the road, to the landing which was generally on a lake or stream from which the logs could be driven to their destination to be sawed into lumber, the Otter Tail River system being the outlet for most of the Pine Point timber (Carter 1990).

As lumber companies came in and cleared entire forests, our ecosystem fell out of balance. Trees are an essential member of our world. Trees provide homes for the Anishinaabe and relatives like the Eagle, Beaver, and Squirrel. They also provide food for the Anishinaabe, the Moose, the Deer, and the Porcupine. Trees also help to hold moisture and nutrients in the soil. But when the trees disappeared, so did the Water, causing a drought. From drought came wildfires, and this dryness also made it difficult for Anishinaabeg to garden (Meyer 1994). The logging companies also dammed up waterways to transport lumber, causing floods that destroyed many of our Wild Rice beds and low-level gardens (Ibid.). Ignatia Broker remembers these painful times in a retelling of her great great grandmother Oona's life on White Earth in *Night Flying Woman*:

> I do not like cutting the trees," said Father. "I think too often of the animal people. They will be few, and they will be gone from this land. When we have enough of the lumber, I shall no longer cut the trees or travel the rivers on them. My heart cries too often when I do this." "My heart, too, cries often," said Mother. "It cries because we are surrounded. The strangers who cut the trees are many and now the people who do the planting are here. And my heart cries for the Ojibway children who will never feel the moss beneath their feet or look up at the shi-n-go-b, the tall trees, as Oona has done. (1983, 72-73)

These memories of Broker's ancestors speak to a real sense of grief for our forest relatives, and the concern our ancestors felt for the future generations of Anishinaabe children. The grief that Anishinaabe people felt for the forest connects to what Mexican and feminist scholar Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera (2021) calls "grieving geographies". Rodríguez Aguilera writes that grieving geographies are "spaces of complex collective loss due to multiple interconnected forms of violence. Grieving geographies are where the deaths of humans and other-than-humans collide, compounding pain and sorrow" (2021, 29). These feelings of sorrow are what White Earth and the greater Anishinaabe community continue to feel as we remember the past deaths of our loved ones, and as we continue to experience loss from ongoing colonization and environmental destruction.

Colonizers did not stop at the forests. After the Nelson Act of 1889, when settlers began buying Indigenous allotments, many began moving into the western half of the reservation where the prairie was (Meyer 1994). These settlers then began a rapid transformation of our native prairies into agricultural land. They cleared prairies with steel plows, cutting deep into Mother Earth's flesh, ripping up sod, native grasses and flowers, killing the landscape herself (Granger and Kelly 2005). Settlers did not stop at clearing the grasslands, they wanted more land for farming and so they began to drain most of the reservation's wetlands, erasing the most vital source of life in the prairies: Water (Ibid.). This massive transformation of the prairies and

wetlands in White Earth and throughout the Great Plains destroyed the habitats of many important relatives including the Prairie Chicken, Waterfowl, Elk, Sage, and countless other animals and medicinal plants.

In the end, settlers ended up destroying about 95 percent of the wetlands in western Minnesota,[25] 99 percent of its prairies,[26] and *all* of our forests in White Earth (Meyer 1994). Combined, these acts of violence combined took countless lives of Anishinaabeg and Gidinawemaaganinaanig. Thus, just forty years after the start of the reservation in 1867, Anishinaabe people found themselves cramped in a post-apocalyptic landscape made up of barren hills, tree stumps, thirsty soil, and wildfires. In thinking about the past, I cannot help but regard the actions of lumber companies and settlers as genocide or the deliberate extermination of all our relatives, Gidinawemaaganinaanig. Opposed to the more common definition of genocide which is limited to people, I include Gidinawemaaganinaanig, because it includes our relatives who are not human. This is because Anishinaabe people understand we are an extension of the land, and the land an extension of us. The land feeds and becomes part of us, and we feed the land when we return to her in death. Violence against Mother Earth is violence against us. Dakota scholar Kim Tallbear writes,

> The decimation of humans and nonhumans in these continents has gone hand in hand. When one speaks of genocide in the Americas it cannot be understood in relation to the European Holocaust, for example, that is seen as having a beginning and an end, and which is focused on humans alone. Our genocide in the Americas included and

---

[25] See Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. n.d. "Wetland Quality." Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Accessed April 30, 2023. https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air-water-land-climate/wetland-quality#:~:text=Southern%20and%20western%20Minnesota.

[26] See Minnesota DNR. n.d. "Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan." Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/prairieplan/index.html.

> continues to include our other-than-human relatives. … We need kin to survive. In turn, Indigenous peoples speak out not necessarily from individual courage but rather their irrepressible voices cannot but call attention to injustices, and they continue to call the settler state to account for its failures at kin-making here, with both humans and nonhumans (As quoted in Davis and Todd 2016, 770-771) .

These genocides against Anishinaabewaki were enabled by the United States government and perpetrated by lumber companies and settlers. These genocidal actions were also a direct attack on Anishinaabe sovereignty and Mino-Bimaadiziwin, because they destroyed the very land that allowed us to refuse assimilation and destruction. How can Anishinaabe people live in solidarity with our Gidinawemaaganinaanig, if those relatives are destroyed?

As a result of extractive clearcutting, our forests looked very different from before. In addition to having younger trees, the very biological makeup of our forests changed. Before the clearcutting of Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, the eastern part of the reservation was dominated by trees such as Birch, Spruce, White Cedar, Balsam Fir, and especially Red and White Pines. As Anishinaabe people, we had a use for all of these trees for medicine and construction, but the lumber companies desired the timber, especially the towering pines, and cut everything. In their stead, broadleaf trees like Ash and Basswood become more prominent, but by far the most populous was Poplar, often called popple here in the midwest and aspen out west. A-USDA sponsored report states that,

> Due to the combined effects of logging and wildfires, between a fifth and a quarter of northern Michigan was transformed into conditions favoring the establishment of aspen (poplar). Similar situations occurred in Wisconsin and Minnesota. This was a monumental ecological event and led to what is probably the largest human-caused forest type conversion in history" (Cleland et al. 2001, 87).

Because of permanent habitat loss and overhunting, some of our animal relatives like the Buffalo, Moose, Elk, and Pine Marten have been pushed off of White Earth, and still have not come back. Another significant disappearance was Giizhik or White Cedar. Giizhik is a sacred medicine that all Anishinaabe know. But during my time in White Earth this summer, I can't recall ever seeing Giizhik there. Lea Foushee, an Anishinaabe environmental justice activist points out, "White Earth tribal members have told us they must travel long distances to harvest northern white cedar boughs which are both culturally and nutritionally significant" (2010, 4). The reason I am talking about genocide of land and people is that it is linked to our sovereignty as a nation. We cannot have Mino-Bimaadiziwin if vital members of our ecosystems are absent. In creating our sovereignty, we have to think about how we can begin to heal our unbalanced ecosystems.

Gichi-wani-gitigewin miinawaa Aakoziiwakamigaawin –

Large-scale Industrial Agriculture and Pollution

Environmental genocide continues to this day in the form of large-scale industrial agriculture, and is directly contributing to sickness and malnutrition in the bodies of the people and the land. In the western half of the reservation, large-scale farmers are using unsustainable industrial agricultural practices to increase their production and profit. These practices include monocropping, heavy tractor tilling, use of herbicides, insecticides, and artificial fertilizers. What these industrial commercial farmers don't realize, or choose to disregard, is that their practices are destroying a dynamic and longstanding web of relationships that are necessary for life.

The use of heavy machinery tilling disrupts critical lifeways of the soil. It is genocidal not only on the macro level as it prevents plants from growing, but also on the micro level because it kills countless microbes, all of which are vital to the circle of life. Diane talked to me in detail about the negative impacts of large-scale industrial agricultural practices on the land:

> Basically, you just need to open up that ground enough to get that seed in there. Because when you till it up, you turn it. There's different layers in the soil, so different organisms live at different layers. When you go like this (turning soil), you've just caused an earthquake, so all of their pathways that they had are broken, all of their highways are broken. If you live up here, just an inch under the surface, and I just turned you now six inches under, what do you think's gonna happen? You're gonna die.

In addition to killing microbes, current farmers practice monocropping (or the planting of only one vegetable as opposed to multiple varieties), which also disrupts the natural ecology of soil. Diane says on this respect:

> If you look at the way nature does it, it doesn't mono-crop. Things grow together and they help each other. The different plants help each other, they attract. The different plant families, and I don't know all of them, but there's grasses, there's the forbs, the brassicas, the legumes, all of these different types attract different types of microbes. So, if you just got one type growing, you're only going to have this type of microbes. When you have the different plant families growing, you have all these different microbes, which really improve your soil. We really have to look at what nature does, and mimic that. But we humans, we get arrogant and we think we can do things better.

What Diane is describing is companion planting or the close planting of plant relatives that live together and support each other. These relationships are harmonious and reflective of Mino-Bimaadiziwin between different plant nations. Just like how enzymes, bacteria, and blood cells help to protect and nourish our bodies, companion planting offers similar benefits for the plant community including pest control, retaining moisture, and keeping soil healthy (Harris and Streets 2022). When I visited Stephanie, she showed me her large garden which was full of dozens of different vegetables and medicinal plants all of which gii-wiidookodaadiwag, “helped

each other". Stephanie taught me about how Nanking Cherries, for example, help to keep out bunnies and other animals that will eat your garden, because they form a protective screen. She also taught me that Asemaa or Tobacco, in addition to being a medicine, is great for attracting hummingbirds who serve as pollinators and bringers of good medicine. If there's something to say about Stephanie's garden, it's that it was harmonious as each plant, person, insect, and pollinator fulfilled a very important role in sustaining the garden community. Stephanie's garden represents Mino-Bimaadiziwin because Stephanie and the plants work together rather than against each other.

Another concerning piece of industrial agriculture are artificial nitrogen fertilizers. Nitrogen is an essential ingredient for life. Diane noted how industrial farmers are dependent on artificial nitrogen fertilizers, instead of nitrogen-fixing plants like Beans and Peas. In a process called acidification, nitrogen fertilizers create disharmony in aquatic ecosystems because they disrupt the chemical balance in the Water and cause fish to eventually suffocate to death (Brauer 2004).

Large-scale industrial farmers also use genetically engineered variants of plants that have been altered to grow faster, bigger, and ultimately make more money. Genetically engineered vegetable variations have been manipulated in a lab and have not been developed in the organic way that Indigenous peoples have used for millennia (USDA 2022). Indigenous peoples in the Americas have cultivated over 250 variants of Corn (Hilaire 2000). Today, however, most big farms are using a few genetically modified variants of Corn which are not the same as our Indigenous Corn varieties that have lived in this region for thousands of years and are comfortable with our specific climatic conditions. The current dependence on these few

variations of Corn and other vegetables could prove deadly for entire nations, because just one plague of insects or blight could wipe out that entire variety, and leave us with nothing. On the other hand, high genetic diversity of our vegetables means that some may be hurt by a plague but others will survive. Diane discusses the risks of genetically modified vegetables:

> My personal opinion is we should not be messing with things the Creator made. We cannot make them better. Trying to do this gene messing around with stuff is bad. I think it's going to come back to haunt us… we're decreasing the plant diversity so much. When you have that plant diversity, you're more able to survive, because if something comes in that affects certain varieties of this plant, they may suffer, and you may not get very much of it, but you've got these other varieties that are okay with the fungus or this insect. But, when we just have this small variety of these GMO plants, what if something happens to them? We've got nothing to fall back on. Plus, you can't save the seeds.

In addition to the insecurities of plague and blight, you cannot save the seeds from genetically modified varieties of Corn because the next generation will not bear "true seed", meaning the next generation will be different from its parents.[27] Instead of depending on these genetically engineered seeds, my teachers have argued for returning to planting heirloom varieties of seeds, in other words, the seeds our ancestors developed.

I have talked about the harmful effects of tilling, monocropping, artificial fertilizers, and genetically modified vegetables, but perhaps the most wide-reaching and harmful of the agricultural practices on White Earth are the industrial farmers' use of chemical pesticides and herbicides. Both the words herbicide and pesticide contain the root "cide" which comes from Latin "cida" meaning "to kill". These chemicals are instruments of death and are designed to kill plants and insects that large-scale commercial farmers consider a nuisance to their

---

[27] See Texas AgriLife Extension Service. n.d. "Hybrid Varieties and Saving Seed." Aggie Horticulture. Accessed April 12, 2023. https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/vegetables/SEED.html.

productivity. What these farmers fail to realize is that insects and “weeds” are vital to a healthy ecosystem and nutrient cycle. When farmers spray to kill, they kill this vital web of connections. While researching at Extension, I also worked with a long-time employee of the Tribal College, Tammy Bellanger who is a white elder and the current Extension coordinator. Tammy speaks about the ecological dangers of herbicides:

> I firmly believe in no chemicals, Roundup, Grazon, 2,4-D, all these different chemicals are destroying the ecosystem and mono-crops are not part of nature, they're abnormal. That's where you see the negative impacts from insects and weeds. They're trying to tell you something, that you're not doing things right. You won't have the weed pressure or the insect pressure, if there's a high degree of diversity, nature will take care of itself.[28]

As human beings, we are not separate from the insects and plants, we all eat and drink from the same Earth. The deadly herbicides and pesticides have, over the years, entered into human bodies and are causing serious health concerns. The late teacher and spiritual leader Earl Hoagland discusses pollution in his book *Sacred Water*:

> We have a lot of contaminants and pollution in the Water, today, that were not there a long time ago. On White Earth Indian nation, for example, about half of our reservation is woodland on the East and the Western half is farm country. Whatever they put on their fields in the way of herbicides and pesticides comes to us in the winter from the prevailing westerly winds. Much of the soil from their fields blows into the wooded areas and contaminates the Water. Sometimes in the winter after a strong west wind we can see a dirty film of soot on the snow. It is coming from the farmers’ fields, when they are plowed up and the fine dust and dirt blows into the wooded areas of the east (where most Anishinaabe people lived and subsist). This has an effect on the Wild Rice. It affects other animals and people that are using the Water, using the fish, eating things from the Water, gathering roots or rice or animals that are living in the Water or around the Water. There are things at the bottom of that food chain that eat and accumulate more and more contaminants (Foushee and Gurneau 2010, 140).

---

[28] Bellanger, Tammy. Interviewed by Zaryn Prussia. Personal Dibaajimowin (storytelling). White Earth Tribal and Community College, Gaa-waabaabiganikaag, June 2, 2022. All quotes throughout this paper belong to the same interview. All quotes have been lightly edited for clarity.

Some of the contaminants that Earl refers to are pesticides like dioxin, chlorothalonil, chlorpyrifos, Diazinon, and the infamous herbicide Roundup, also known as glyphosate (Ibid.). On White Earth, these toxins are contributing to cancer, birth defects, mental and emotional impairments, skeletal deformities, middle ear infections, kidney and liver failure, miscarriage, sterility, rashes, weakened immune systems, and of course death (Ibid.). My family comes from Nezhingwaakaakong or Pine Point. Currently, the village of Pine Point is surrounded by large-scale Potato farms that are, at this moment, contributing to alarming health disparities in Pine Point. Ishkode comments on the issue:

> When I worked for the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) there, I'd ask that guy " what do you think of these guys (industrial farmers)"? And he's like " I know these potato companies have a bad reputation for using up the topsoil and polluting the Water table, but these guys are pretty good. I've been pretty pleased with them". And I just looked at him because in the same breath, he said a "million gallons per field" and you're real pleased because they're not contaminating the Water table. You just said that they are contaminating the Water table because it's a million gallons with herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers. Sure enough, it wasn't even just two years later that Hubbard County is having to put in a new city Water system because the groundwater is contaminated with all the fertilizers and pollutants.

The Pine Point area also sits on top of a large aquifer or body of underground Water. Aquifers are the veins of our Mother Earth, and this aquifer just so happens to connect to the headWaters of the Mississippi River, the largest Watershed in the United States. In the words of Ishkode, "We're at the top of the Water table (a large area of connected underground Water) ... So we're on the (continental) divide here, whereas all the Water in one direction goes to the Mississippi and down to the Gulf of Mexico, all the Water in the other direction goes into the Wild Rice River and then in the Red River into Canada." As Ishkode describes, White Earth is directly connected through underground Water systems to the rest of the continent, from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. Thus, whatever toxins go into our soils and Water, will eventually go on to

pollute the rest of the continent, and ultimately the ocean. As human beings, Anishinaabe or not, we have to consider the impact that pollution will not only have on our community, but on the rest of the world.

Because of the pollution here, I spent time discussing with Ishkode about possible unpolluted places on the reservation. We discussed Long Lost Lake which sits just outside the eastern border of the reservation. Long Lost Lake is one of the cleanest lakes in the state of Minnesota because it is located at the top of the continental (Laurentian) divide and fed by nearby underground springs. Long Lost Lake is an example of the drastic disparities in environmental health between Anishinaabe and rich White communities. Ishkode comments: "Long Lost Lake had a gold rush in that rich, non-native families bought up most of the lake property and built mansions all the way around it because it's a non-polluted Water table. It's at the top of the Water table. It's spring-fed. they're securing resources for their children and grandchildren." So while low-income and Anishinaabe communities like Pine Point are suffering from polluted environments and health problems, our lakes, such as Lake of the Valley, White Earth, Bass, and Elbow, happen to be the locations of various resorts and lake homes of predominantly wealthy non-native populations, who are also white. This is an example of environmental racism which environmental justice scholar-activist Robert D. Bullard defines as, "any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or advantages individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color. Environmental racism combines with public policies and industry to provide benefits for white people while shifting costs to people of color and is reinforced by government, legal, economic, political, and military institutions" (2001, 160-161). Because of land fraud through allotment, White Earth simply

does not hold all of the land around our lakes, and our tribe is forced to live with what little acreage is left, be it on a clean lake or surrounded by toxic farms.

So why talk about this? What do pollution and environmental racism have to do with restoring Mino-Bimaadiziwin? Well, the restoration of our well-being is directly connected with the restoration of our land. We can get our land back, and we can learn to garden and harvest Wild Rice but we will never be safe and healthy until we can live from a land that is healthy. For over a hundred years white settlers and corporations have been committing genocide against Gaa-waabaabiganikaag and her people. This all connects to what Bob problematizes as "food safety":

> Sovereignty, it's an uphill struggle. But I feel I have to do what I can, wherever I am. in terms of contributing to the overall effort. We used to talk about how to be a strong nation, we have to be a healthy nation. If we're going to be a sovereign nation, we have to be able to meet our own needs. If you look at this here White Earth reservation and lots of neighboring reservations around us, we're a long ways from that, in terms of health: healthy people who are healthy in body and mind and spirit. We've surrendered a lot of that to others. When we talk about food sovereignty, a lot of times we don't talk about the food safety piece of this. It goes back to where we originally sold out a lot of our power to the big corporate farms in California, and Arizona, and Mexico, and Guatemala, places like that. A lot of *pesticides* go into all that.
>
> I used to work in that whole arena. I cut my teeth, in terms of toxics. With the metals, I cut my teeth on Mercury. With the chemical stuff, I cut my teeth on the 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo P *Dioxin*. Then you can go all the way, including way deep into our food chain, in terms of the toxicity and how it affects us. There's a lot to that in terms of food safety that we're not talking about. Regulatory agencies say "Oh, it's okay, you can have up to this little amount of this kind of toxic, and this little amount of this other kind of toxic, and this little amount of this kind of metal" and on and on down the road – in your cabbage! "It's okay to have a little bit of poison in your cabbage." But what we're not talking about is not only that stuff in your cabbage, it's in your lettuce, it's in your carrots, it's in your beets, it's on and on down the road. But we're only talking about what's in the cabbage. So, there's this cumulative thing that we really don't pay much attention to because regulators have said, "Oh, well, you can have this much poison in this kind of food".
>
> So, there's that whole safety issue that's tied to sovereignty. In the natural world, what good is a reserved treaty right to fish if the fish aren't safe to eat? So, you can go there not only with fish, but with lots of other things. We don't think about those things.

> We go out and catch a bunch of nice big walleyes out in the White Earth lake, and get our daily dose of mercury. But then maybe a couple days later, we head on down to toilet [Detroit lakes] and go have a shrimp dinner someplace. And then while we're down there, do some shopping, bring some tuna, and have some tuna sandwiches, a couple days later; all overloaded with mercury. But we're only talking about the walleye that you go out and get. So, there's a lot tied to the whole food safety, what constitutes safe food.

As Bob says “What good is a reserved treaty right to fish if the fish aren't safe to eat?”. As a nation, we can’t just practice traditional foodways and become sovereign. We have to do so within a healthy environment or else we will become sick and die. Returning to Mino-Bimaadiziwin will not be an easy process but it is necessary if we seek to continue to exist as a people. It is incumbent upon us as a community and nation to take on the issues of food insecurity, disease, and pollution, by restoring Mino-Bimaadiziwin. In the words of Diane:

> We didn't get to this place overnight. It's been going on for many decades now. So we're trying to work our way out of this hole. That's what we're trying to do in our small little space here, is try to work our way out of this hole, which in turn will make the soil healthier, which will make our plants healthier, which will make our people healthier.

Naniizaanad iw Aanjiwebak – The Threat of Climate Change

While I worked on this project and spoke with elders, the concern of climate change became more and more apparent. Initially, I had planned to work with Anishinaabeg from all over Anishinaabewaki, including Mallard Island which sits in the center of Rainy Lake between Canada and the United States. I had hoped to attend a sustainability retreat there but the trip got canceled due to severe flooding. White Earth also received heavy rain, and when I came back to my nation in early June, the soil was too damp to plant and Bob was anxious to start before it was too late in the planting season. You see, the growing seasons in Minnesota are short, only lasting about 4-5 months, and this summer’s planting happened to be delayed by a month. In

addition to delaying planting, these rain storms also flooded and endangered Wild Rice beds. Heavy flooding can kill the rice because they require a specific water level to survive, between one and three feet deep. These heavy rains and flooding are signs of climate change throughout Anishinaabewaki. In disrupting the summer harvest and the Wild Rice beds, climate change is already jeopardizing our ability to live off of the land.

While speaking with elders on White Earth, they all shared concerns about climate change. Ishkode depends on Wild Rice and maple syrup to feed and support his family. He shares how the climate has changed and his concerns:

> When I was a kid, I would get on the school bus, and it would be dark during school hours. And when I got off the bus, it would be dark again, because it's winter out. So to go play outside, I would stand under the yard light, and I would wish for something other than this eternal winter… I dreamed of really nice weather in the winter when I was young. Now that I'm older, and that it's happened a couple of times, things have just thawed out. The sap was running in January, the sap has run in February. The sap has ran way late. The sap is all out of sink. It's worrisome because things that you always thought you could count on, can't be counted on anymore. When I was a kid, we would walk down the river at my grandparents house, where the Water was so clean, you could drink from the river and you wouldn't think nothing of it. Now I wouldn't drink from that river, it's all milfoil because of all the cow pasture. It's ongoing, and it's getting worse and worse…The consistency of our weather has gone. We have Alberta clippers in the summer now… And instead of snow, it's got high density moisture and it surges. It's like if you were to take a rock and skip it across the Water. Every time it comes down, it will flatten the trees and everything will bounce up and land further downwind. It's basically an Alberta Clipper in the summer and they're dangerous.

Ishkode mentions how the maple sap has begun to run out of season and inconsistently because of climate change. As Anishinaabe people, we have always expected maple sap to come in the moon of Iskigamizige-giizis (the Maple Sugar Moon which occurs about mid-March to mid-April) after the snow begins to thaw and before the flowers bud. Sap runs when the sap inside the trees thaws and during this short 4-6 week window one can harvest hundreds of

gallons of Maple sap for sugar and syrup.[29] With fluctuating temperatures, however, the sap will run at unpredictable times and in thawing and freezing produce less sap.[30] Our people have thrived because of our knowledge of the seasons, but when these seasonal patterns become inconsistent, we cannot predict them and rely on the land. We lose track of time and the universe ceases to make sense.

In addition to rainstorms in the summer, there has also been drought. In the summer of 2021, a year before I started this research, a drought had swept through Minnesota and made it impossible for many to even get into the rice beds, because the water levels were so low. Lisa recounts the situation:

> The last few years, the Wild Rice has been ripe, but last year because we were in a massive drought, we had a bumper crop. There was no standing Water so that we could get out onto those lakes to go get it. The year before, it was ready and then here came the Thunderbirds and wiped it all out, the high winds knocked all that rice right into the Water.

While a moderate amount of drought can be good for Wild Rice abundance (Gunderson 2021b), an intense drought will not only prevent access but can evaporate all the Water and kill the rice.[31] Dryness and hot temperatures impact not just the Wild Rice, they affect all lives. Dryness stops vernal pools (seasonal wetlands that form from melting snow and spring rains) where our amphibian relatives respawn (Cartwright, Morelli, and Grant 2021). Drought also

---

[29] See Minnesota DNR. n.d. “Maple Syruping.” Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/maple_syruping.html.
[30] See Giesting, Kristen. 2020. “Maple Syrup.” USDA Forest Service Climate Change Resource Center. 2020. www.fs.usda.gov/ccrc/topics/maple-syrup.
[31] See Gikinoo’wizhiwe Onji Waaban. n.d. “Ojibwe Lifeway: Wild Rice Harvesting (‘Dagwaagin’-Fall).” G-Wow. Accessed April 30, 2023. http://g-wow.org/en-us/wildrice/default.aspx.

dries the soil and limits the ability of plants to grow (Seleiman et al. 2021). Did I mention that we need Water to drink? Nothing can live without Water because Water is life.

Ecologists from the University of Minnesota's Center for Forest Ecology have argued before the Legislature that because of climate change, the biomes of Minnesota are shifting (Boswell 2021). Warmer temperatures mean more droughts and drier soils. Prairies in the west will start to creep into the eastern half of the reservation and replace our forests, while our northwoods trees like Spruce, Balsam Fir, and Birch will start to flee north, where it is cooler. If warming continues, our entire reservation could be converted to prairie in as little as 50 years![32] Animals like the Moose are already on their way north and if this continues, other northwoods animals will continue further north, including the Porcupine, Raven, and Lynx, and many others. Tammy has also noted a change in our local ecosystems because of climate change:

> I've definitely seen changes in the climate… The winters, there's such a wide fluctuation. We never had floods like we get now. Back in, I think it was 2001, within the span of one week, we had 24 inches of rain. They said that was a five hundred year flood. Then, you have 70 degrees in March. Just unheard of. That was in 2011. There's also different animals coming into the area that I've never seen in all my years. Last year was the first I saw a possum. And there's way more turkeys now in the area than I've ever seen. I hardly ever see a moose now, I think they've moved farther north. I've been seeing different plants in the area, that are encroaching further and further north. There's different timing. Before, you could pretty much guess that the bird migration was going to happen within a few days, like it was the previous year. Now, you just don't know. The weather fluctuations are just wild. I've never seen it so windy as I have this year and last winter.

The sacred cycles of the Earth are unraveling and the land is changing before our very eyes. Why is this happening?

---

[32] Ibid.

In the (2007) synthesis report of the International Panel on Climate Change, countless scientists have combined quantitative findings to explain how climate change has come from excess consumption of carbon-based fuels and from industrial agriculture. In addition to this understanding of climate change, the Anishinaabe also understand our changing climate as Aki attempting to rebalance herself in response to our disruptive actions of greed, extraction, and from abandonment of our original responsibilities to care for the land.

By and large, neoliberal governments and extractivist corporations are to blame for this worldly imbalance, but as a community what power do we have to stop this? Is it even worth enacting Mino-Bimaadiziwin if the biggest contributors to climate change and pollution are larger than us? I think so. In addition to holding governments and corporations accountable, we also need to look at ourselves. If we cannot make the change within our own lives, how can we expect them to follow suit?

Gidaa-manaaji'aanaan Aki – We Must Respect the Land

This change requires us to rethink how we treat our relatives and earn revenue for our nation. In addition to food programs, our nation has become severely dependent on outside monetary investment in our casinos, lands, and natural "resources", like Wild Rice. In 2019, the USDA contracted the tribe for a promised 50 '000 pounds of Wild Rice to be sold annually outside of the reservation.[33] In addition, Ishkode comments that some individuals are even harvesting Wild Rice in wasteful and disrespectful ways for their own gain:

> They'll even use like aluminum tent poles and stuff like that… they grab the whole thing, rank it into the bulk, and break all the stocks, and just strip it off there…They

[33] See USDA Wild Rice Contract, WERBC Resolution no. 001-20-006, (2019).

> think that they're gaining something, but they're not, because all they're doing is making a mess. You're getting all the heads and everything right off the rice, and then when you stop, you're gonna sit and throw all those heads back. You're not getting more rice. You're wrecking the rice. I can't see how they could get more rice. Rice only gives as much as it wants to.

Extracting our Wild Rice, especially in such violent ways, is contrary to Mino-Bimaadiziwin and counterintuitive to our own sovereignty. As Anishinaabeg, we must foster relationships with the land that are reciprocal and respectful, not extractive and abusive. In this respect, Leanne Simpson points out, "My ancestors didn't accumulate capital, they accumulated networks of meaningful, deep, fluid, intimate collective and individual relationships of trust. In times of hardship, we did not rely to any great degree on accumulated capital or individualism but on the strength of our relationships with others" (2017, 77).

I am not angry at our nation for having had to support ourselves through outside investors and "resource" extraction, because these necessities were forced upon us. But I am concerned for our future. Our dependence on outside investors is the same as our dependence on commodities. It is unstable and undermines our own sovereignty. Let's not forget that sovereignty has to do with self-governance, with free will. If our survival requires us to extract from our land and depend on the money or food of someone else, then, is that really free will? More importantly, this extraction of our relatives, in this case, Wild Rice, is creating a deadly imbalance in our ecosystems and leading to dangerous climatic conditions on the reservation. Lisa talks about how the extraction of our Wild Rice is angering the land and the Manidoog (spirits) and directly contributing to climate change on the reservation:

> Because of colonization and assimilation, the last two years, and a few years before that I've noticed that we've been getting spiritual spankings. Food sovereignty is also tied to our cultural practices, our ceremonies, and understanding what that is. So, today we went out and did a Water ceremony, and it was offering that food to those Water beings

> and to that Water, asking for permission and giving thanks for life. Because that's what Water does, that Nibi, that spirit and all of those beings that keep that Water clean … Before we ever went out to harvest Wild Rice, ceremony was done… That ceremony was done, the offerings were made before anybody could even go out onto that Water. They couldn't put their boats on that Water until that ceremony was done. We're not doing that anymore… So, what's happening is that we have people out there, and unfortunately to some degree our tribe is also doing it thinking it's an economic development thing, but they're exploiting our Wild Rice. We have people out there that are breaking those stalks and destroying them. They're hurting it. This is why they were getting spiritual spankings, because we're no longer out there collecting it, and doing the ceremonies as we should be, and people aren't out there respecting it, knowing that rice is supposed to be for family and community.

Plants are powerful beings. They come from the Earth. They have the power to cure sickness, but they also have the power to take life. Respecting the land is important. If our relationships become abusive and unbalanced, our actions will come right back to bite us in the form of drought, flooding, tornadoes, and other natural disasters.

In thinking about extraction and climate change, I also want to speak about current forestry practices on the reservation. The extraction of our forests unfortunately did not end when the tribe took over forestry from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. While exploring the backwoods on tribal land, I stumbled upon a large swath of recently clear-cut land deep in the forest. It almost looked like a tornado had come through and torn everything down and carried it away. For acres upon acres, I saw sticks and severed decaying branches. Upon seeing this land, my heart felt a deep sorrow for these relatives who I know had passed away not long before I arrived. I was very concerned about the health and future of our forest and did not know what was going on. I called the Tribal Forestry office and they told me that it was mostly adult Poplar back there and that they were at the end of their lives. According to the White Earth forestry webpage:

> Our primary focus in timber sales has been the harvest and regeneration of the disproportionate stocking of over-mature aspen (poplar) on Tribal lands. The majority of our hardwood management is accomplished through the sale of fuel wood lots to Tribal members. When these woodlots are harvested as marked, they accomplish a timber stand improvement project, because the higher-quality trees are reserved from cutting.[34]

These timber practices reflect a more extractive pattern rooted in extractive forestry management where patches of mature popple trees, i.e. a regenerating forest, are cleared, grow back, and are clear-cut again.

While I know that the Poplar harvest provides income for tribal members and that the tribe tries to leave species like Birch and Maple in peace, the constant cutting and regeneration of Poplar trees is not good for the long-term health of our forests, nor is it leading to actual sovereignty. If anything, the current lumber practices are suffocating our forests and contributing to our nation's dependence on extracting Gidinawemaaganinaanig. According to the University of Minnesota, "Two years after clear-cutting, there should be at least 5,000 aspen (popple) root suckers per acre. Some stands may have up to 70,000 root suckers per acre."[35] If you drive through the forests of White Earth these days, most of what you will see is Poplar, a sign that land has been clearcut, but with scattered stands of Maple, Balsam, Pine, and other trees, a sign that the land is also healing. You see, what makes Poplar such a good relative is that they help to stabilize the soil and heal the Earth after a destructive event, but in their old age, they allow other tree species to move in (Sargent and Siciliano Carter 1999). Larg-scale and

---

[34] See White Earth Forestry Office. n.d. "Forestry." *White Earth Nation*. Accessed April 30, 2023. https://whiteearth.com/divisions/natural_resources/services.

[35] See University of Minnesota Extension. 2019. "Managing Aspen and Birch Forests." *University of Minnesota*. 2019. https://extension.umn.edu/managing-woodlands/managing-aspen-and-birch-forests.

incessant harvests of poplar, however, do not allow this cycle of healing to complete itself, so culturally important species like maple and Birch have a hard time bouncing back.

While participating in a Birchbark basket workshop with the Tribal College, we had to drive deep into the woods to find a stand of Birch trees that was even large enough to harvest. This is concerning because we have used Birch for our homes, canoes, utensils, and art forever. We need Birch to continue this tradition. If we do not want to lose our Birch like we lost our Cedar, we need to rethink how we care for our forests, and by care, I mean real compassion and consideration for their lives.

In extracting our Wild Rice and forests in violent and unbalanced ways, we are repeating cycles of colonial violence that were and are perpetrated against us and the land. Our disconnection from Mino-Bimaadiziwin and the resulting abuse of the Earth stems from that original trauma stemming from the violence of colonizers against us through the colonization of our lands and our ancestors. Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon (1961) describes this colonial way of thinking as a colonization of the Native mind. This colonized mindset, in our experience, has forced us to think that Aki is a resource and capital, not a dignified living being whom we should respect. It is imperative to unlearn these colonial mindsets if we really want to have sovereignty, which is also sovereignty over our minds. In following the footsteps of the colonizer, we stray further from our ancestors and further from Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

It is time to unlearn and end this colonial cycle of trauma. When we abuse our forests, when we abuse our Wild Rice, when we abuse our children, our partners, and our siblings, we are only abusing ourselves. This abuse will have dire consequences for the people and for all of

creation. We are destroying those relatives who we depend on and whom other Gidinawemaaganinaanig depend on too. We cannot feed ourselves if the very land we depend on is out of balance, sick, and dying. This is what is happening with climate change, Mother Earth is trying to balance herself out. If we want to see our Moose, Cedar, and Birch relatives return, and if we want to stop Wild Rice from disappearing forever, we need to respectfully allow the land to heal instead of continuing to wound her. Because, if we keep picking at Mother Earth's scabs, our Waters, forests, and prairies will scar and remain forever changed.

Chapter 6: Bimaadiziikaawin

Abundance of Life

I now want to address the question of feasibility. There may be some who think that White Earth does not have enough land or life to feed our people. The elders and I would like to disagree. White Earth is the second largest reservation in the state of Minnesota by land area. Within its 837,120 acres, there is an abundance of life to support our people. According to Diane:

> There's so much land here and it's good land. We have white clay here. That's why it's called White Earth. It's good, fertile soil. And we have lots of forested area, we have the prairie. So there's plenty of food here. It's just getting more people to grow their own food and to grow food that specifically *for people*, and then getting those areas where we have those perennial things growing and those areas in the wild where it's providing us with food. And not overharvesting and allowing those areas to be undisturbed, so that they continue to grow, making sure we don't have the pesticides and toxins around there.

As an Indigenous nation, we need to think more about how we can feed our people through our land, not through extraction and income, but by creating sustainable and self-sufficient food systems. Instead of selling our rice to the USDA, those 50,000 pounds of Wild Rice could be used to feed a lot of local families. Half of our on reservation-population (about five thousand) are Anishinaabe. One cup of Wild Rice equals 6-8 servings,[36] and there are about 2 ⅔ cups of rice in a pound, meaning that the 50’000 pounds of Wild Rice we sell to the USDA amounts between 800,000 and just over 1 million meals for our people on White Earth. Our tribe has done a great job at defending the rights of our Wild Rice and allocating some of our rice to

---

[36] See Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council. *Recipes and Answers to Often Asked Questions 2010 - 2011 Edition*. Saint Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council.

Anishinaabe people through commodities, so let's continue to bring Wild Rice to the folks who really need it, our people.

Another way in which we could feed our people is through planting perennial orchards or fruit trees like plum, apple, and cherry, and perennial berries like Strawberries, Juneberry, and Blueberry. Planting perennials would feed far more people than any revenue from clearcutting. Moreover, it would feed our people every year. While spending time with Ishkode, he showed me his wild orchards of Plum, Apple, Juneberry, Mulberry, and Cherry. Ishkode is a big supporter of orchards as a means of creating (food) sovereignty and had this to say about the current lumber practices on the reservation:

> In Red Lake (reservation), they have all these orchards. So, one time this guy came to the farmers market with Juneberries, nice, big delicious June berries because Red Lake has orchards. Every Juneberry he brought with him, he could sell it and he would sell it before anybody because it's the first berry of the year. Then, he just stopped coming one day… We have the resource of lower Rice lake (an important source of Wild Rice) for now. We need more resources like that. We need more orchards like Red Lake has so people can use their harvest (inaudible). Not many people I know keep this popple (poplar) we grow or the jack pines we grow.
>
> Zaryn: You can eat the popple?
>
> Ishkode: No. You could use the buds as medicine, but we don't have much use for popple. Why are we growing all this popple? I don't know anybody that really eats popple, and jack pine's okay to burn, but we really don't really use the Jackpine, except for when they swindle it out of us at the Ojibwe lumberyard. We're not going to have food sovereignty and keep growing popples and Jack pines. It's just not that sovereign for us.

I agree with Ishkode that using our forests for resource extraction is not the path to sovereignty. Perennials would also be a great option for families in the east where the soil is sandy and acidic and where raising annuals is more difficult. In fact, Tammy spoke to me about her desire to plant more fruit trees for the reservation:

> I'd love to see more tree guilds, more perennials. They take less work and they produce more over time. When you look at annuals (vegetables that must be replanted every year), there isn't as many of the actual native food that are annuals. There are more perennials (plants that live long lives) in nature. I'd like to see more people learn about wild foods, to learn how to create their own tree guilds (orchards that are planted with companion plants), and to see more access available for this. Over the years, I've been noticing that every family has, I shouldn't say every family, but those that do go harvest, they have their special spot that they kind of keep to themselves and don't tell others about, because the fruit trees are finite, and there's only so much to go around. So if we're planting more trees, we're helping nature, and we're helping each other because mono-crop farming and agriculture takes up so much of the ground. More perennials would mean there's more food locally for families to harvest.

Imagine what would happen to hunger on the reservation, if every family had an Apple Tree in their backyard or if there was an orchard nearby. That is really taking care of our people.

White Earth is abundant in life, but this life is not unlimited. As stewards of the land, we also have to be conscious of not taking too much life and by giving back to the land with tobacco, a song, or a seed. We need to avoid overharvesting because if we do not, those relatives who we depend on will either leave or die out. Bob explains: "When I look at food sovereignty, if we all decided to head out to the bush and gather whatever, it wouldn't be long and we'd be out of everything. We'd be out of deer, we'd be out of rabbits, we'd be out of raccoons, beavers, muskrats. Plus it would put a lot of strain on the vegetation, on Creator's garden." As Bob says, there might not be enough animals or berries in the forest to feed everyone year-round (and even I still wonder about that), but there is certainly enough soil to garden. Stephanie, who has been gardening in White Earth all her life and whose food knowledge stretches back generations, breaks down the math: "Not all of our tribal members live here. But even if they did, we do have enough land to support all of those people. Because one acre of land can sustain a family of three or four." When Stephanie refers to supporting a family, she is referring to feeding them. White Earth only holds about 9 percent of our original land base. This 9 percent

amounts to about 76,955 acres.[37] If one acre can support a family of three that means that we not only have enough to support the more than five thousand Anishinaabe living on the reservation but our entire enrolled population of more than 19 '000. Add the occasional Deer, Walleye, and Muskrat, and we would certainly have enough to feed our nation. Finally, once we have more of our lands back, we will be able to continue supporting our nation as our population grows.

If we are creating gardens, we don't have to cut every tree down and pull out every root for garden space either. That's the settler way of doing things. The land already has plenty of plants we could be eating. Plants that have been there for generations and that have formed cooperative networks that support life. As a homesteader, Ishkode discusses this approach of minimal disruption to homesteading or gardening:

> Having a new place like this, nobody's ever lived here, the first idea most people have is just to clear the shit out of everything and get it down to bare clay or something, then build a house. But there's probably stuff you can use already growing, and learning to identify it before you wreck the place can save you years of effort.

When Ishkode first started his homesite, there were already Plums and Chokecherry. But it's important to remember that berries are not the only edible plants. There are plenty of green edible plants that we have learned to dismiss as weeds. Two of the most prolific plants disguised as a "weed" are Dandelions and Clover. Stephanie points this out to me:

> Stephanie: Dandelions and clover, (some of the) most nutritious plants there ever was…
>
> Zaryn: What part of the dandelion (do you eat)? Do you just cook it or…?
>
> Stephanie: Yeah. The flowers. The flowers are the yellow part and each one is a flower, not the whole head. That's dozens and dozens of flowers. So you can take those and you can eat those. Then the leaves when they're young. The roots, you take those and you

---

[37] See White Earth Reservation Business Committee. "Economic Development." *White Earth Nation*, whiteearth.com/divisions/weedo/services. Accessed 30 Apr. 2023.

> can use them for tea or cut them up. It all depends on your taste. You find different ways to eat different things. Most plants at one time or another, you can eat the whole plant.

The Anishinaabe garden was never just Corn, Squash, Potatoes, and Beans. We also had the forest, the largest communal garden there ever was. Mother Earth has already planted plenty of garden in the woods, lakes, and prairies for the Anishinaabe and all of creation to survive.

As you can see, there are a lot of settler-colonial practices, like clear-cutting and heavy tilling, that we need to unlearn. But there are also traditional practices that we need to re-learn, like plant identification and companion planting, as we return to the land and re-engage with Mino-Bimaadiziwin. In practicing Mino-Bimaadiziwin, it is not only important that we understand the land but that we form a relationship and deep understanding of the place we are living in. White Earth is split between three different biomes, the northwoods, broad-leaf region, and finally the prairie (Meyer 1994). These regions have different microclimates, based on soil type, temperature, elevation, and rain. In the prairie and broad-leaf region the ground is more dense and nutrient-rich, and will hold more Water. This type of soil is great for growing annual crops, meaning crops you have to plant again every spring, like Squash, Corn, Tomatoes, Totatoes, Beans, Lettuce, etc. In the eastern part of the reservation, the soil is more sandy and acidic and won't hold as much Warter and nutrients. In these types of locations, perennial plants like Strawberries, Plum Trees, and Cherries do very well. And then there are crops like Tobacco and Corn which do well in a variety of soils. Throughout the reservation, there are various individuals and families working to complement the region where they live. The Tribal College is located in the prairie region and mostly grows annuals because that's what grows easily in its clay soils. Stephanie, on the other hand, uses an even mix of perennials like Raspberry, Strawberry, and Plum with annuals like Tobacco, Tomatoes, and Corn because the broadleaf

zone has clayey nutrient-dense soils, and also access to Water from lakes and streams. As for the sandy northwoods section, Tammy mentions how a former co-worker has co-planted Squash with Pine trees to fit this area: “My former coworker, he plants squash. He's more into the Pines area and when he planted squash, he utilizes the trees that are next door and they climb up the tree. You save a lot of space that way. That's the tree instant trellis right there… It is so much easier planting things that love the soil here.”

Plants are just like people. They have their own quirks, needs, and wants. Before you plant a seed, ask yourself: Is the one who I am planting here going to like living here? Stephanie has an emotional understanding and connection with her garden plants. Her plants have thus been paired with different beds, structures, protection, and companion plants to make them most comfortable. With Asemaa plants for example, she uses raised beds and companion planting in order to not disturb these sensitive plants and keep them company. Stephanie describes:

> Asemaa loves company… That’s why I have it right there in the garden. Because we sit here, I go over there, and I talk to them all the time, the hummingbirds love it, and we're in the garden all the time. So we're always there, it's a part of our family. I also have them up in raised beds, because the roots are very shallow. So, if you walk around them in a field or something like that, they get compounded. It's a dance with Asemaa. You have to learn how it is ,and what it likes, and what it doesn't like. That's with all plants. I tried to tell that plants are just like humans, except for they're way smarter. They all have their personalities, they all have their needs and wants. An Asemaa plant might have different needs and wants then another plant, but kind of the same in general, just like people, but we're all individuals.

In accommodating our plants and making sure they are comfortable, we are being respectful. As human beings, we are an extension of the land and we can either work with or against Aki. In choosing the former we are sure to be good relatives and provide for our communities perpetually.

These suggestions are just to get us thinking about where we are and what to plant. If you live in Naytahwaush and want to do an annual garden, or if you live in Waubun and want an orchard, do what feels right. As Anishinaabe people, we have always practiced our foodways in diverse and innovative ways. There is no one true way to live. Mino-Bimaadiziwin has always been made up of a plurality of relationships with the land, based not only on the geography of each space, but the needs, wants, personalities, dreams, and imagination of each individual living there. Ishkode also lives in the northwoods, but he does not plant squash like Tammy's former co-worker. He is an artist and works to care for his grandchildren and so does not have a lot of time to look after an annual garden in the summer. Because of these factors, he relies mostly on perennials. In practicing Mino-Bimaadiziwin, let's embrace plurality and what each individual can bring to the table.

In concluding this chapter, I want to acknowledge that most of my work was with gardeners and engaging with Aki through gardening. And so my paper has revolved mostly around gardening as a form of Mino-Bimaadiziwin. This is not the only way. Our people fish, we hunt, we trap, we tap trees, we gather Wild Rice, we raise animals. We have always had a plurality of ways to support ourselves. If you are reading this and are thinking you would rather do something else, I respect that. Stephanie has explained to me that you have to let people choose their own path:

> When you're young, you think you want to change the world. Well, you need to focus on changing your world, not the whole world, because my world might not be what everybody else wants. So, why should I force my lifestyle on other people? I don't want them forcing their lifestyle on me. People that want to come here and listen to my story, then I'll tell it to them, and they can decide what they want to do from there.

Some people might not be attracted to gardening and that's okay. I respect that not everyone will be drawn to gardening, but for some reading this manuscript, it might resonate and their newfound passion might inspire others. That is why I am writing this honors thesis, to share an important message, educate, and inspire.

Bob understands that his work is not about making everyone garden, it's about inspiring people who will:

> Here in this work I do, we keep giving away seeds, we keep giving away tomatoes, and cabbage plants, and all kinds of stuff. We give away strawberries, we give away raspberries, we give away all kinds of food, producing seeds and plants. And we keep doing it and we keep doing it. We give a whole bunch of this stuff away every year. Well, I don't know what happens to it, once it leaves the door here or wherever we're giving it away. I'm just assuming that some of it goes home with some of these folks, and they either don't plant it or plant it and then don't take care of it, and get nothing to very little out of it. That's gonna happen and that's okay. That's part of the deal, we know that's going to happen. But we also know that there are people who are gonna gravitate towards gardening, there are people in families, that's all they've ever done, as far back as anybody can remember in the family, that family has always gardened. We give all this stuff away in support of the experienced gardener, the multi-generational gardening family, all the way to the ones who've never gotten their hands dirty; but for the first time, feel that Earth on their hands and wonder why they didn't do this a long time ago. We had an example right out here this morning with one of the staff over there. Last year, she had never planted a thing in her life, she knew absolutely nothing about it. We got her started. Now she loves it. So sometimes it's one small victory at a time. You keep plugging away, keep providing support, keep providing information, keep providing whatever assistance you can here on this White Earth Reservation, to make sure that people can be as successful as they can with the given of their situation, when it comes to the gardening.

This is all to say that on White Earth we have the land and the life to feed our people and that to maintain our sovereignty and our integrity as Anishinaabe land-stewards, we must treat the land with respect, reciprocity, and humility. We will be stronger, healthier, and more sovereign, if we do so. Gardening is just one way in which we can feed ourselves through

Mino-Bimaadiziwin, but it is only through looking to all of creation that we can thrive as we have always done.

Chapter 7: Miinikaaning Azhe-onji-zaagakii Mino-Bimaadiziwin

Mino-Bimaadiziwin Emerges from a Seed

Gaa-izhi-miinigooyang Mandaamin Niizhing

How We Were Gifted Corn Twice

Mino-Bimaadiziwin begins with a seed. I think that one of the best seeds to start planting with is Mandaamin, or Corn. As a seed, Mandaamin can be planted in almost any soil. I have seen Mandaamin planted in our prairies and forests here in White Earth all the way to high mountain valleys in Ecuador and the humid lowlands of the Amazon rainforest. As Anishinaabeg, our relationship with Mandaamin goes back thousands of years. I first learned the story of Corn while reading the writings of the late Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, who as a bilingual Anishinaabe woman was not only the first Anishinaabe literary writer, but the first Native American literary writer north of Mexico. According to Schoolcraft's version of the story of Corn (2007), Mandaamin came to the Anishinaabe when an Anishinaabe child went out alone to fast for his vision. The child's family had a difficult time supporting themselves by hunting and fishing and so the boy, who loved his family dearly, prayed to the Creator, Gichi-Manidoo, and asked for a way to help feed his struggling family. The Creator heard the boy's prayers and meditations and was moved by the child's selflessness and respect for all of creation. Thus, Gichi-manidoo sent Mandaamin-manidoo, the spirit of Corn, to help the boy. It was already the third day of his fast and the boy was very weak from days of fasting without food and Water, but he saw a being coming from the sky. Mandaamin came to the child in the form of a man covered in multicolored green blankets and flowing feathers in his hair.

Mandaamin told the boy that he had been sent by the Creator to give him something to help his family and people, but that first the boy had to beat him in a wrestling match "as it would be only by his courage and perseverance, as well as strength, then he could hope to succeed in his wish to do and get good for mankind." (Ibid. 185). These two wrestled for four days, and on the final day, the boy won against Mandaamin, slaying him. In doing so the boy followed Mandaamin's instructions:

> "I (Mandaamin) shall meet you for the last time and when you have knocked me down, clean the earth of weeds and roots and make the earth very soft. Bury me in the spot thus prepared, and come occasionally to see where you shall place me. Be careful never to let the grass or weeds grow on the hillock where I am laid and once in the month cover me anew with fresh earth"… He (the boy) selected a beautiful spot to bury him. It was a shallow vale where the sun shone daily and the dew descended nightly (2007, 186)

Over the months the boy took care of the land as Mandaamin instructed and finally, Mandaamin came back, this time in the form of a vegetable, Corn. The boy would then harvest Mandaamin's gift with his family and people so that even in times of hardship "They will have plenty to eat whilst the world lasts" (Ibid. 187).

I love the story of Mandaamin because it offers many important teachings that resonate with me. The child of the story, out of the goodness and love in his heart, starved and struggled so that he could help to feed his family and people. In turn, he was honored by the Creator and Mandaamin who sacrificed his own life so the Anishinaabe could live well.

Bob shared with me a similar story about how he brought seed back to the reservation. Bob began working with food sovereignty in the early 1990s, at a time when our sovereignty and relationships with Aki were at an all-time low. Whereas a few decades before almost every family gardened, Bob and other Anishinaabeg noticed that many families on White Earth had stopped gardening and even lost our original seeds. Wishing to restore our food sovereignty,

Bob went in search of an heirloom seed to plant, but not just any seed. This seed was Mandaamin; that same Mandaamin which had been gifted to us by the Creator. This would prove to be a difficult task for Bob because many Indigenous nations, including ours, had lost their original seeds due to the disruptive effects of colonization. Bob tells of his quest:

> That turned out to be a pretty daunting task, finding Indigenous varieties of Corn back in those years. I was looking for Corn that I knew would kind of like it around here, compatible with our growing season, nutrient cycle, precipitation, soil type, and all that. I wasn't about to go down and get Corn off the top of some mesa in Arizona. That doesn't make sense. So, I looked around basically from North Dakota to New York to find it and finally found some in New York. That's where it started, planting that first seed. Indigenous varieties of Corn. It's interesting, because we're planting now descendants of that first bag of Corn we got way back then. Since then, lots of others have jumped on the wagon. Now, there's indigenous varieties of Corn all over the place. It's interesting, because we look at the role of Corn and especially Indians around here, they say, "Well, what's that all about?". And I say, "You know, the Ojibwe have been growing Corn for a lot of years. Like going into the 1000s of years", but somewhere along the line, we gave it up. So we have to get started again.

Just like the boy who was determined to help his people and overcome Mandaamin in battle, Bob was determined to find that original seed and give it back to our people. Thanks to Bob's determination, we have original Corn on the reservation, a seed that any community member has access to via the Tribal College Extensions office. This seed has gone on to support the food literacy efforts of the Tribal College, and is actively feeding families. Both the origin story of Corn and Bob's story of returning Corn are examples of just how one person can empower and feed a community.

As human beings, we are interwoven with our spirit, land, and community. Our individual actions, whether we know it or not, have profound impacts on this web of life. The story of Corn and the story of Bob reveal that as individuals we are more powerful than we

think. This is all to say that sovereignty starts with you. In the words of Lisa: “You're sovereign. You are a sovereign being. It's not the RBC or the tribal council, that's a sovereign. It's not the mechanisms of agency. Sovereignty lies in the bodies of the people.” Lisa is right. At the end of the day, we are not treaties, tribal councils, or even Minnesota Chippewa. These words are colonial political structures and identifiers and they were forced upon us by the colonizer. These concepts do not define us in the words of our ancestors because they are not our words or our reality. At the end of the day we are Anishinaabe, the People, and Aki, the Land, because that is where we come from. That is our essence. In thinking about our sovereignty as a tribal nation, we cannot look to governments to create sovereignty; we have to look at ourselves and ask the questions “what can I do to create sovereignty within my own life?”.

Restoring sovereignty starts with individual refusal, a refusal to be colonized, a refusal to be assimilated, a refusal to be dependent, and a refusal to give up. In defeating Mandaamin, receiving Corn, and feeding his parents, the boy refused to give up and he refused to watch his family starve. In bringing back our original Corn seed, Bob refused this too. Our sovereignty as individuals and as a nation depends on our ability to refuse, our ability to say “no more!”.

Because of our dependencies on government food assistance programs, our bodies have become sick and malnourished, and because of our colonization and assimilation, we have become extractive and abusive of our own homelands. It has always been in the best interests of the United States government and settler corporations to keep us dependent, and they certainly won’t be the ones to restore our sovereignty. Our dependence will not cease until we refuse to be dependent on the United States government, convenience stores, extractivism, and instead

choose to create our own balanced food systems. These are not my words, these are the words of everyone I worked with this summer. Lisa is adamant about this when she says:

> So food sovereignty is all of our responsibility. Everybody should be planting their food. I was told this three years ago, maybe four now… people came together and they estimated that within seven years, there is only going to be enough food to feed half of the world's population. Half, which means the other half is going to starve and die. But yet look at all this abundance and land. Anybody could come and grow. We have the community garden for the community members to come and grow… We have to get off our butts, we have to stop being dependent on commods, we have to stop being dependent on the United States Food Systems. And this is where our tribes really need to be focusing on building their own sustainable food systems... We need to create our own food infrastructure for the tribe.

Lisa's words may sound harsh, but they come from a place of concern and compassion. She understands the gravity of the situation. In our community, disease, poverty, and food insecurity are too high and with rising costs, climate change, and global food insecurity, we have to think seven generations ahead about our future, and our survival as not only a nation, but as a people.

Wiidookodaadiwin – Helping Each Other

In addition to refusal, the story of Mandaamin is also a story of generosity and compassion for one's family and community. I have come to understand that part of Mino-Bimaadiziwin is not only that you are living well, but that your entire community is too. As a people, we have always been generous, shared what we have, and sacrificed for the greater good of the community. We have shared our food, tools, and homes, even to strangers. Joseph A. Gilfillan, an Irish missionary who worked in White Earth from 1873 to 1908 writes this about Anishinaabe hospitality:

> I have never been refused admission, and the privilege of passing the night, in any wigwam. When one has been traveling all day through the virgin forest, in a temperature far below zero, and has not seen a house nor a human being and knows not where or

> how he is to pass the night, it is the most comforting sight in the whole world to see the glowing column of light from the top of the wigwam of some wandering family out hunting, and to look in and see that happy group bathed in the light and warmth of the life-giving fire. No princely hotel in a great city can equal the blessedness of that wigwam. And no one, whether Ojibway or white, is ever refused admission; on the contrary, they are made heartily welcome, as long as there is an inch of space.[38]

Such generous relationships are also present between animals. My clan, the Wolf, holds a symbiotic relationship with Gaagaagi, the Raven. Together they depend on each other for survival. The Ravens use their call to help lead Wolves to animal carcasses. In return, the wolf uses its strong teeth and jaws to open up the tough hide so that Raven may eat too. [39]The Wolf can choose not to share its food with the Raven, and the Raven can choose not to alert the Wolf when they find food, but because they work together, they make their lives easier.

This type of cooperation in Anishinaabemowin is known as Wiidookodaadiwin, which means to help each other. I first heard this phrase in the context of the Anishinaabemowin immersion school, Waadookodaading, in Hayward, Wisconsin. Waadookodaading is a word that stems from Wiidookodaadiwin and that according to the school website means "a place where people each help each other". [40]At Waadookodaading, Anishinaabe children work with adult and elder speakers of the language who not only teach them standard education requirements, but work to provide Anishinaabe youth with a cultural education based on traditional practices with the land, such as harvesting Maple syrup, practicing ceremonies, and so forth.

This is Mino-Bimaadiziwin; this is living in loving, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with one another.

---

[38] As quoted in the webpage: "Lodges", The Ojibwe People's Dictionary. Accessed April 30, 2023. https://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/collection/gilfillan-on-staying-in-wigwams

[39] Hay, Anne. "Ravens and Wolves - Friends or Enemies." *Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, 13 Oct. 2022, centerofthewest.org/2022/10/13/ravens-and-wolves-friends-or-enemies/.

[40] See Waadookodaading. n.d. "Waadookodaading." https://www.waadookodaading.org/.

Wiidookodaadiwin is absolutely necessary for enacting Mino-Bimaadiziwin and restoring sovereignty. Many community members do not have the land, seed, and the knowledge to plant. This is where the work of the tribe, local organizations, and empowered community members should come together to educate, provide, and support those who have less access. The people at extensions embody Wiidokodaadiwin because they are actively working to restore traditional foodways and traditions within the greater White Earth community. While speaking with Tammy, she shared with me her passion for education in the community and why she does it:

> Zaryn: Why is this work really important to do? What drives you?
>
> Tammy: It's the community, the students. They're my main focus. This isn't just a job per se, it provides a venue or a way for me to work with community to strengthen food security. It's an extremely high poverty area, and, as a member of the community, when we work together, we strengthen the whole community together. It's not doing for, it's doing *with*. And it's not looking from outside in, it's being a part of the community, building relationships, partnerships, working together for the benefit of all.

Tammy's work helps to empower community members and contributes to community-wide solidarity. Extension's devotion to empowering individuals and working together is Wiidookodaadiwin.

Wiidookodaadiwin has no limit; it is alive and recreates itself each time someone helps another person. Diane discusses how community members who have participated in their workshops have gone on to teach other community members:

> I think we've gotten more people growing food again, and we've also got people who are starting to share their stuff. One lady, she had the strawberry plants that we had handed out. Strawberry plants send out runners, and they just make more and more and more. So she started putting them in pots, and then handing them out to other community members. That was really awesome to see that, and we're getting more

> families now who are saving their seeds and doing their own plant starts. Because to do that for your own family, it doesn't take very many plants, it really doesn't.

This regenerative aspect of Wiidokoodaadiwin is reflective of how we are all connected and how we are enacting Mino-Bimaadiziwin by working together. This is how we build community and make each other's life easier. Wiidookodaadiwin is necessary for sovereignty because a nation cannot support itself when each community-member is dedicated only to oneself. By sharing our knowledge, skills, gifts, and food, we are creating equality. When we work in interdependence, we remove ourselves from unequal and oppressive forms of dependence on government aid and outside investment.

I personally experienced Wiidookodaadiwin while participating in Extension's berry camp in July. There, a community member taught me how to make a Wild Rice knocker with a traditional crooked knife for the first time. Using a crooked knife requires a special technique due to the sideways-curvature of the blade and the unique handle. To make a rice knocker, the knife has to be held with the blade facing opposite the thumb and pulled towards you instead of away. I had never held a knife like this before so it was awkward at first; but in no time I had learned how to carve my first rice knocker. After this, I began to teach Anishinaabe youth how to safely handle the crooked knives and make their own knockers. In the span of a few hours a community member had helped me and I helped others. This selfless transmission of knowledge is Wiidookodaadiwin.

Wiidookodaadiwin does not only involve older people teaching younger people. Wiidookodaadiwin is also cross-generational and non-hierarchical because youth and students who have been empowered are able to empower their older relatives. For instance, children that

have learned through Extension have gone on to teach their parents who never had the educational opportunity as their children. Tammy describes this dynamic:

> We'd have gardening projects, and they (the youth) would come over, and they would harvest, and they would bring it home to the grandparents. The cooking activities that we did with them, they would cook for their grandparents to show them what they learned, and then taught them how to make the things. It was really cool. So we've had a lot of wonderful experiences. The kids have been amazing. I see a lot of leadership development, over the years where kids that were just iddy-biddies when we started out with them, we saw them graduate, we've seen them now be coordinators for different programming. It's been really cool to see them progress and grow into adults.

As a new generation is empowered they go on to teach those that are younger and older. This cross-generational exchange shows how Wiidokoodaadiwin also consists of what I call “lateral empowerment”, the reciprocal and non-hierarchical empowerment of a community through helping one another. Lateral empowerment is necessary if we as a people are going to return to Mino-Bimaadiziwin. We cannot see ourselves as above or beneath one another because of our age, gender, or knowledge, and this includes Aki and all of creation. Let’s understand that we are all both students and teachers, and that when we empower each other and are open to being helped by one another, we become independent from the systems that oppress us. Stephanie explains this process of Wiidookodaadiwin:

> First you need to learn how to live off the land, then you need to go find a neighbor and teach them how to live off the land. Just by nature of that, that's how the supply and demand is going to dwindle, and all of these things are going to stop... We want it. We have to stop wanting it exactly, and the only way to stop needing as much is by doing this: Staying at home, not running around, and growing your own food. That's what people need to start doing, rather than going around telling everybody else that that's what they need to do, when they're not doing it themselves.

In thinking about community mobilization and community solidarity, we cannot forget that Wiidookodaadiwin starts within each individual. Leanne Simpson writes that, “Nishinaabeg

political systems begin in individuals and our relationships to the implicate order of the spiritual world. The ethics and values that individuals use to make decisions in their personal lives are the same ethics and values that families, communities, and nations use to make decisions about how to live collectively…" (2017, 24). Our sovereignty stems from each individual in our community. We decide what our community is and will become. If we truly wish to be a sovereign nation, it requires the active participation of most if not everyone. The Tribal College can host workshops, share seeds, and even provide a place to plant, but if we disregard these opportunities, we are preventing ourselves from becoming empowered. Lateral empowerment within Wiidookodaadiwin requires equal participation and reciprocity from the entire community.

Solidarity is key to Wiidookodaadiwin. As a community, we have been divided among various lines, including socio-economic, educational, locational, and especially racial lines. These divisions go back to the days of colonization. When Europeans arrived on our lands and declared themselves as superior, they imposed upon us their racist, patriarchal, capitalist, and anti-queer hierarchies through ideologies and actions such as boarding schools, missions, and allotment. When they imposed their allotment system, only Anishinaabe considered "mixed bloods" (Anishinaabeg with European heritage) because they could speak English, dressed "modern", and did not fit Native American stereotypes, were able to manage their allotments (Doerfler 2015). Instead, those considered "full-blood" (no European heritage) by anthropologists and Indian agents were deemed mentally incompetent and could not manage their allotment (Ibid.). These hierarchies reproduce themselves in the form of colorism, where some mixed-descent Anishinaabe people who conform to European standards of beauty shame

those who have darker skin. Racist classifications stemming from allotment and blood quantum (the quantification and minimum requirement of ¼ "Indian blood" to be a tribal member) have also contributed to divisiveness within the reservation. These days, Anishinaabe people are criticized by their own community for looking "white" and sometimes their Anishinaabe ancestry is even called into question, despite most of us being of mixed descent. As a child, I received such comments from other people in my community due to my lighter complexion and can attest to the painful sense of rejection and inadequacy you feel when you are rejected by your own community. Such rejection is not conducive to solidarity and is a form of lateral oppression that threatens lateral empowerment, and ultimately the community aspect of Mino-Bimaadiziwin. As a community we need to stop discriminating against each other for how we look, our enrollment status, and where we grew up. We should focus on restoring relationships between families, community, and with the land.

On top of divisions between Anishinaabe people, there are also great divisions between the white and the Anishinaabe community. This is of course understandable as the presence of white people on the reservation stems from colonialism and it has contributed to racism, environmental racism, and the withholding of land. I will always be critical of the great inequality that exists between settlers and Anishinaabe people, but I also want to avoid this "us" vs "them" mentality because I do not think that it is conducive to decolonization. Tammy and Diane, despite being white and descendants of settlers, have lived on White Earth for a long time and devoted their work to the community. They understand the racial inequalities and support Anishinaabe people because they are part of our community. Their work at the Tribal College reveals that Wiidookokaadiwin is not just about mutual help between Anishinaabe

people, but how as community members of diverse backgrounds, we can still come together to restore good living and well-being. Just because we work together with white community members, does not mean we should ignore the ongoing realities and systemic inequalities that were and are perpetuated through settler colonialism. Working together does not mean that colonization is forgiven and it does not mean that those lands they occupy should not be returned. But, by working together with white community members and creating respectful and reciprocal relationships, they can come to better understand our struggle and instead of supporting systems of inequality and harming Anishinaabewaki, they can become good relatives and contribute positively to the community while supporting our efforts for restoration of land, life, and liberty. I also want to note that Wiidookodaadiwin includes community members of other identities from White Earth such as our Black, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Asian relatives. Finally, I want to recognize that we were not the first tribe here and that it is our duty to welcome back the Dakota who were here before us. In returning to our Mino-Bimaadiziwin, I hope that in Gaa-waabaabiganikaag we can continue to foster Mino-Bimaadiziwin through Wiidookodaadiwin, working together.

Giiwekiiwin – Returning to the Land

I have discussed the need for us to begin Mino-Bimaadiziwin with refusal and by planting your first seed. I have discussed the need for us to overcome divisions and work together, but there is one important character missing from this equation, the land. Our well-being and our sovereignty does not come without our relationship to the land.

Because colonization and assimilation have disrupted our Mino-Bimaadiziwin, many of us are just beginning to reconnect with the land. Through working with elders, I have learned to treat this reconnection as a ceremony. A ceremony isn't always a sweat lodge, it's also how you walk through this world. Because we are constantly interacting with spiritual beings, we are always engaged in a ceremony, which is an intentional and respectful dialogue between human beings and Gidinawemaaganinaanig. Stephanie, who also holds a close relationship with Aki, mentions the importance of this intentional communication with Gidinawemaaganinaanig:

> You want to talk to the plant, because you don't go to the doctor and just stand before them and say nothing. So you talk to them and let them know how you need their help, and they will help you. Especially if you have other issues, if you let them know that, then they'll stay away from that. It might not make sense to some people, but they do.

When I planted, weeded, harvested, or just went for a walk, I always tried to respect and connect with that plant's spirit, as well as the spirit of our Mother Earth by offering some Asemaa. Our relationships with Aki have always contained the spiritual because we are spiritual beings. When we recognize that plants, insects, and soil are not just sticks, leaves, and dirt, but relatives who feel, hear, and love, we open up ourselves for opportunities to receive Akinoomaagewin and heal. Lisa describes how in gardening, Mother Earth, seed, and Anishinaabe are intertwined in the creation of life:

> Our food sovereignty is in our ceremony. It's in our song. It's in our teachings. It's in those feastings and all of these pieces… I went and planted a three sisters garden. But before I did anything, I put my Asemaa (tobacco) down and asked Aki, Mother Earth, for that permission. I put the seeds in my mouth, because when a baby nurses from mom, baby's saliva goes through mom's nipple and communicates with mom's body, telling mom's body what baby's deficient in. So then, the body adjusts the milk production to ensure that it's meeting what the baby needs nutritionally. So, when you see mom eating all of these other foods, it's because that's what she's craving, because that's what her body's telling her that's what she needs to be able to then feed baby. The same applies to seeds. I had a handful of Corn seeds, and I put them in my mouth,

> because I'm communicating to that seed what I'm deficient in. I'm deficient in iron, I'm deficient in vitamin D, I'm deficient in potassium, so I have to supplement those. So then that seed goes into the ground, and then it pulls that from the Earth into what it's growing, to be able to nourish me.
>
> Then, I go out and I talk to them. I'd sing to the plants all the time. And what was interesting is… they brought some scientists from the U of M and they're like "why is her plot doing better than else's here?"... It wasn't that I had the best spot in the same field as everybody else, it was because I respected that plant, that Earth. And when I was harvesting the Corn, I had to be taught how to braid them... So I sat there, and a song came to me. I don't even know what the words were, I couldn't repeat it to save my life. But I sang that song the entire entire time as I sat and braided that Corn.

When Lisa offered Tobacco and suckled on that seed, she was initiating a dialogue with Mother Earth and asking for permission and compassion in planting a seed. Her actions served to connect herself, the seed, and Mother Earth all together in a relationship, and ask for the nutrients she needed to live well. Finally, the song she sang was giving back to the land the gift of her voice which made Mother Earth and the seed happy, and allowed her to grow a lot of Corn. Lisa's experiences show that Aki has a consciousness of her own, and that in being intentional about planting, Mother Earth will have compassion for us. Our ceremonial interactions with the land are thus a way that we can heal and learn from the land. These relationships show how reciprocity is an important part of Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

The land does not only heal through its nutrients. Mother Earth is a spiritual being and her medicines come through spending time with plants and interacting with them. By interacting with plants, we are healed in a spiritual way. Stephanie talks about this when curing Tobacco:

> I love doing this because, even though it seems like a mountain of work, all of those things are just like ceremony. And when you're having (bad) things going on in your life, when you handle plants, they help lift those things away and then help you find your answers just by being there, being by them, handling them, and taking care of them.

Relating with plants helps to heal us. This healing ceremony involves consent, communication, respect, and reciprocity. This means we should treat gardening and any land-based tradition as a ceremony. This ceremony with the land is what our ancestors did to thrive, it's what made us sovereign, and it's what we did to live in solidarity and balance with all of creation. In engaging in ceremonial relationships with the land, we are enacting Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

Creating sovereignty can seem like a daunting task because there are so many forces trying to keep us from learning our ways and realizing who we are as Anishinaabeg. Just remember that decolonization is a process and a dream. You don't have to do everything now, just plant that first seed. Lisa says:

> If you don't grow food, start with one simple thing in a bucket, put it outside your window in the summertime, put it outside your deck. If you're living in an apartment, put it on your little deck. But try to start growing. Start learning how to forage our traditional foods. We're going to do berry camp. Come to Berry camp. We can go and pick the blueberries, we'll teach how to make jams, how to preserve them.

Sovereignty begins with that first seed, from which other seeds will grow to feed and empower more community members. Before coming to volunteer this summer, I had only ever planted a few times. But by the end of my experience, I had planted hundreds of seeds all of which went on to be food for the community. I made this decision to go out and become empowered by my community. No one made it for me. You might not be up to date on the latest permaculture techniques or have the homestead essentials, but by putting your Tobacco out there and planting a seed, even if you fail, we will learn and get closer to sovereignty.

Your first seed does not have to be literally a seed either. Tomorrow you might tap a Maple tree, harvest Birch bark, pick up that hand drum, or finally open up that Anishinaabe language textbook on your bookshelf. These are all a form of seed, because in practicing our

traditions, we are taking back agency in our daily lives and setting ourselves up for a lifetime of learning and lateral empowerment. Now, as I look forward to learning more about gardening, trapping, hunting, fishing, speaking my language, singing, and dancing, I continue to refuse dependence and assimilation. In so doing, I am planting the seeds of Mino-Bimaadiziwin and sovereignty within my own life and with my community. Imbaabaa-gitige ji-azhe-mino-bimaadiziyang.

Mii Sa Iw

Conclusion

I remember sitting in on some Ojibwe courses at the college and listening to an elder say something that really stuck with me. He talked about how today we sometimes feel a lot of shame and create many reasons as to why we cannot or should not learn our traditions or language. Maybe we think we aren't smart enough, or that we don't have enough time, or that we aren't Anishinaabe enough. Or maybe it's because we think we don't need our traditions or language anymore. But, if we could just think about how much our ancestors sacrificed so that we can have our traditions today, we can begin to believe in ourselves and see the true value of our traditional ways. I think of ancestors like Chief Bagone-Giizhig, Whole in the Day, whose life was stolen in 1868 because he advocated for justice and dignity for our people on White Earth, or Waynaboozhoo who endured many hardships to gift the first Anishinaabe people many of our ceremonies and stories, or Earl and Kathy Hoagland who found ways to preserve our traditions at a time when Anishinaabe culture was experienced as "shameful", and the countless ancestors whose names we might not remember, but whose actions have impacted countless generations. Stephanie makes us aware that, "Our ancestors gave up so much for us to have what we have right now. Our whole life, we need to be thankful and grateful for that and do our best, at least that you know that's my point of view. Everything that they've done for me, I want them to be proud of me when I finally go back to them."

I am truly thankful for their strength and determination to preserve our ways. Now it is our turn as Anishinaabe children and grandchildren to do the same. Our White Earth elders like Stephanie and Bob will not always be here to teach us. If we care about this knowledge, it is our

job as Oshkaabewisag to go to our elders and spend time with them so that we can carry on their teachings and memory. Mino-Bimaadiziwn, good living, begins with you because you are a sovereign being.

The colonizer has for generations attempted to destroy the Anishinaabe by disconnecting us from who we are, Aki – land. They have stolen our land, outlawed our traditions, killed us, sent us to boarding schools, cut down our trees, flooded our rice beds, arrested us, polluted us, and caused widespread chronic disease and food insecurity. These were all attempts to colonize, assimilate, and erase us. But we are still here. The land is still here. Our Wild Rice, our forests, our fish, our seeds, our Gidinawemaaganinaanig are all still here. Thanks to our elders, our traditional foodways are still here. It's all still here. As Anishinaabeg we just need to get back into reciprocal, respectful, and loving relationships with the land. Our elder Bob, that old Zhaashiigid Nooding (Pissing in the Wind), says it is time for us to get back to Mino-Bimaadiziwin:

> When you consume those wild and Indigenous foods, it's like a ceremony. Because each and every time when you take a bite of something from that Creator's garden, you're renewing the relationship with where that comes from. So it goes back to our creation story. *That's* food sovereignty. When it's based in those kinds of practices, that kind of knowledge, whether it's the wild and the Indigenous, or whether you're planting a garden to supplement everything. This Earth holds the knowledge and the ingredients for a healthy life. We just got to get back to it. That's all.

In this paper, I have also called out our dependencies on the United States government and the capitalist market in general. Gaining independence from these systems contributes to decolonization, but it is also a process because decolonization is a process. We might not cease our dependency on capitalism and government funding anytime soon, but we must understand that these are dependencies. Some might wonder if we would survive if the United States

stopped sending funding to our community and people stopped spending at the casino. This is a valid concern, but we must always be thinking about the long-term future and well-being of our people and lands. If we as individuals and as a nation are going to rely to some extent on capitalism we must do so as responsibly as possible, having Mino-Bimaadiziwin in mind. That means refusing to extract and abuse Gidinawamaaginaaninaanig, like the Poplar and our rice, but harvesting in a sustainable way. Furthermore, tribal revenue cannot go to the enrichment of one individual or one family; it must go to support every Anishinaabe in the community through food, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. That is Miini'idiwin – reciprocity and Wiidookodaadiwin – lateral empowerment. Thankfully, it seems our nation is moving in this direction. In 2021, our tribe adopted the White Earth Medical Cannabis Code to help support access to alternative holistic medicine. The potential millions of dollars of revenue from selling medicinal cannabis could support the education, healthcare, and housing for tribal members, and also strengthen tribal infrastructures for judicial, law enforcement, and other agencies for social justice issues. But apart from directly meeting our people's needs, our nation must continue to use our revenue to create independence from these oppressive food and economic systems and restore our original sovereignty and Mino-Bimaadiziwin through the creation of sustainable and sovereign systems of food, energy, Water, etc. This means creating community gardens and orchards, installing solar energy, partnering with other communities and Indigenous nations, and teaching community members how to live off of the land. That way, if another catastrophic event such as the COVID-19 pandemic comes, we will not only survive, but remain a sovereign and thriving nation.In this paper, I have focused on restoring Mino-Bimaadiziwin through gardening because of its potential to feed and heal all of our people and instigate

sovereignty, but I also want to highlight that Mino-Bimaadiziwin means so much more than gardening. Mino-Bimaadiziwin is in our language, it's in our songs, it's in our ceremonies, it's in our herbal medicines, it's in our dances, it's in our Wild Rice, it's in our families, and it's in our hearts. It is truly only when we enact Mino-Bimaadiziwin in its entirety and when that Mino-Bimaadiziwin is shared by Gakina Gidinawemaaganinaaning, all of creation, that dreams for sovereignty can become true.

While I volunteered in White Earth this summer I made new friends and reconnected with old ones. We all shared a passion for the resurgence of traditions and we actively worked to learn and share them with our people. When we heal, the land heals with us. Our forests are still young, and we might not perceive it yet, but when I see the saplings of Birch, Pine, and Maple, and when I see our youth engaging with the land, I am filled with hope. Perhaps seven generations from now, our descendants will look upon the flowing prairies and the towering trees that our ancestors first saw when they came here more than 150 years ago. Perhaps they will see Buffalo herds grazing under the spring Sun, and Moose nibbling on Red maple buds, while Anishinaabe families plant Corn. Perhaps, they will see a community where the people are happy, live long lives, and are united with the land once again. Nindinawemaaganidog, this dream for Mino-Bimaadiziwin begins with you. This all begins with a seed!

Gaa-agindaasoyaan

Bibliography

Arias, Elizabeth, Jiaquan Xu, Sally Curtin, Brigham Bastian, and Betzaida Tejada-Vera. 2021. “Mortality Profile of the Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native Population, 2019.” *National Vital Statistics Reports* 70 (12).

Benton-Banai, Edward. 1988. *The Mishomis Book : The Voice of the Ojibway*. Indian Country Communications.

Bernstein, Lenny, Peter Bosch, Osvaldo Canziani, Zhenlin Chen, Renate Christ, Ogunlade Davidson, William Hare et al. 2007. “AR4 Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report.” Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Blodgett, Amy T., Robert J. Schinke, Brett Smith, Duke Peltier, and Chris Pheasant. 2011. “In Indigenous Words: Exploring Vignettes as a Narrative Strategy for Presenting the Research Voices of Aboriginal Community Members.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 17 (6): 522–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800411409885.

Boerigter, Clare. 2022. “Ojibwe Firefighters Restore Fire to the Cloquet Forestry Center.” University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences. 2022. https://cfans.umn.edu/news/restoring-fire.

Boswell, Mark. 2021. “Climate Change Threatens Minnesota’s Forests.” Star Tribune. 2021. https://www.startribune.com/climate-change-threatens-minnesotas-forests/600042780/.

Brauer, Donald P. 2004. *Guide to Lake Protection and Management*. Edited by Jeanne Prok. Freshwater Society.

Broker, Ignatia and Steven Premo. 1983. *Night Flying Woman : An Ojibway Narrative*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Bullard, Robert D. “Environmental Justice in the 21st Century: Race Still Matters.” *Phylon (1960-)* 49, no. 3/4 (2001): 151–71. https://doi.org/10.2307/3132626.

Carter, Nancy A., ed. 1990. *The Ponsford Connection*. Fergus Falls.

Center For Indian Country Development. “White Earth Reservation.” *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis*, 2017,

www.minneapolisfed.org/indiancountry/resources/reservation-profiles/white-earth-reservation.

Cleland, David T, Larry A. Leefers, and Donald I Dickmann. 2001. “Ecology and Management of Aspen: A Lake States perspective”. In: Shepperd, Wayne D.; Binkley, Dan; Bartos, Dale L.; Stohlgren, Thomas J.; Eskew, Lane G., *comps. Sustaining aspen in western landscapes: Symposium proceedings*; 13-15 June 2000; Grand Junction, CO. Proceedings RMRS-P-18. Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 81-100.

Cornect-Benoit, Ashley, Karen Pitawanakwat, Jennifer Walker, Darrel Manitowabi, and Kristen Jacklin. 2020. “Nurturing Meaningful Intergenerational Social Engagements to Support Healthy Brain Aging for Anishinaabe Older Adults: Nakaazang Wenjishing Naagdawendiwin, Nji Gechipiitzijig Anishnaabek.” *Canadian Journal on Aging / La Revue Canadienne Du Vieillissement* 39 (2). Cambridge University Press: 263–83. doi:10.1017/S0714980819000527.

Davis, Heather, and Zoe Todd. 2017. “On the Importance of a Date, Or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene”. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16 (4):761-80. https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1539.

De la Cadena, Marisol. 2010. “Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond ‘Politics.’” *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2): 334–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01061.x.

Doerfler, Jill. 2015. *Those Who Belong: Xdentity, Family, Blood, and Citizenship among the White Earth Anishinaabeg*. Michigan State University Press.

Domingo, Ashleigh, Kerry-Ann Charles, Michael Jacobs, Deborah Brooker, and Rhona M. Hanning. 2021. "Indigenous Community Perspectives of Food Security, Sustainable Food Systems and Strategies to Enhance Access to Local and Traditional Healthy Food for Partnering Williams Treaties First Nations (Ontario, Canada)" *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 9: 4404. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18094404

Erdas, Caterina. 2020. “Wolves and Ravens: Defining a Unique Relationship.” *Osmosis Magazine* 2020 (1). : https://scholarship.richmond.edu/osmosis/vol2020/iss1/6 .

Favorite, Andy. n.d. “Andy Favorite and Larry Aitken on Ojibwe Blood Quantum at White Earth Tribal College.” University of Pennsylvania. Accessed April 12, 2023. https://ojibwearchive.sas.upenn.edu/seven-directions/ningaabiianong/blood-quantum.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1961. Translated by Constance Farrington, New York, Grove Press, 1963.

Foushee, Lea, and Renee Gurneau. 2010. *Sacred Water*. Translated by Mary Moose, Lawrence Moose, Eddie Benton-Benai, and David Niib Aubid. North American Water Office.

Giniwgiizhig – Flocken, Henry. 2013. "An Analysis of Traditional Ojibwe Civil Chief Leadership." PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota. http://purl.umn.edu/153332.

Granger, Susan, and Scott Kelly. 2005. "Historical Context Study of Minnesota Farms, 1920-1960." Minnesota Department of Transportation. 2005. https://www.dot.state.mn.us/culturalresources/docs/crunit/vol1.pdf.

Gunderson, Dan. 2021a. "St. Benedict Nuns Apologize for Native Boarding School." MPR News. 2021. https://www.mprnews.org/story/2021/10/26/a-reckoning-monastic-order-apologizes-for-native-boarding-school.

Gunderson, Dan. 2021b. "Dry Conditions Might Mean a Good Year for Wild Rice." MPR News. 2021. https://www.mprnews.org/story/2021/07/08/dry-conditions-might-mean-a-good-year-for-wild-rice.

Grusin, Richard, ed. *The Nonhuman Turn*. University of Minnesota Press, 2015. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt13x1mj0.

Harris, Natasha, and Jesica Streets. 2022. "Companion Planting." West Virginia University. 2022. https://extension.wvu.edu/lawn-gardening-pests/gardening/garden-management/companion-planting.

Hilaire, Larry. 2000. "Corn: An American Native." *Spanning the Gap* 22 (1).

Huanacuni, Fernando. 2015. *Vivir Bien / Buen Vivir : Filosofía, Políticas, Estrategias Y Experiencias de Los Pueblos Ancestrales*. La Paz, Bolivia: Coordinadora Andina De Organizaciones Indígenas.

Indian Health Service. 2013. "Disparities." Indian Health Service. January 1, 2013. https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/disparities/#:~:text=Diseases%20of%20the%20heart%2C%20malignant,deaths%20(2009%2D2011).

Inez Hilger, Marie. 1998. *Chippewa Families : A Social Study of White Earth Reservation, 1938*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

IPCC. 2007. " Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Chang." Edited by Core Writing Team, Rajendra Pachauri, and Andy Reisinger. *IPCC*. Geneva, Switzerland: IPCC. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar4/syr/.

Jacklin, Kristen, and Phyllis Kinoshameg. 2008. "Developing a Participatory Aboriginal Health Research Project: 'Only If It's Going to Mean Something.'" *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 3 (2): 53–67. https://doi.org/10.1525/jer.2008.3.2.53.

Kakaei, Hojatollah, Heshmatollah Nourmoradi, Salar Bakhtiyari, Mohsen Jalilian, and Amin Mirzaei. 2022. "Effect of COVID-19 on Food Security, Hunger, and Food Crisis." *COVID-19 and the Sustainable Development Goals*, 3–29. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-323-91307-2.00005-5.

Kovach, Margaret. 2010. *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto: University Of Toronto Press.

LaRoque, Michael J. 2023. "White Earth Tribal Council Quarterly Report." White Earth Nation. https://whiteearth.com/assets/files/home/news/White%20Earth%20Tribal%20Council%20Quarterly%20Report.pdf.

Lavallée, F Lavallée. 2009. "Practical Application of an Indigenous Research Framework and Two Qualitative Indigenous Research Methods: Sharing Circles and Anishinaabe Symbol-Based Reflection". *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *8* (1). 21–40. SAGE Publications. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800103

La Vía Campesina. "Food Sovereignty, a Manifesto for the Future of Our Planet." *La Vía Campesina*, 13 Oct. 2021, viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty-a-manifesto-for-the-future-of-our-planet-la-via-campesina/.

Johnston Schoolcraft, Jane. 2007. *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky : The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*. Edited by Robert Dale Parker. Philadelphia: University Of Pennsylvania Press.

Price, Kaysey. 2017. "White Earth Reservation Receives State Grant to Fight 'Food Desert' Problem with Food Truck." InForum. September 25, 2017.

https://www.inforum.com/news/white-earth-reservation-receives-state-grant-to-fight-food-desert-problem-with-food-truck.

Seleiman, Mahmoud F., Nasser Al-Suhaibani, Nawab Ali, Mohammad Akmal, Majed Alotaibi, Yahya Refay, Turgay Dindaroglu, Hafiz Haleem Abdul-Wajid, and Martin Leonardo Battaglia. 2021. "Drought Stress Impacts on Plants and Different Approaches to Alleviate Its Adverse Effects." *Plants* 10 (2): 259. https://doi.org/10.3390/plants10020259.

Simpson, Leanne. 2017. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. Minneapolis, MN; London: University Of Minnesota Press.

Simpson, Leanne. 2014. "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3 (3).

Meyer, Melissa L. 1994. *The White Earth Tragedy : Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation, 1889-1920*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Moorehead, Warren K. 1914. *The American Indian in the United States*. The Andover Press. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/57709/57709-h/57709-h.htm.

U.S. Census Bureau. "My Tribal Area." *Census Bureau*, 2021, www.census.gov/tribal/?st=27&aianihh=4595. Accessed 30 Apr. 2023

Rodríguez Aguilera, Meztli Yoalli. 2022. "Grieving Geographies, Mourning Waters: Life, Death, and Environmental Gendered Racialized Struggles in Mexico." *Feminist Anthropology* 3 (1).

Taillie, Lindsey Smith, et al. "Global Growth of "Big Box" Stores and the Potential Impact on Human Health and Nutrition." *Nutrition Reviews*, vol. 74, no. 2, 29 Dec. 2015, pp. 83–97, https://doi.org/10.1093/nutrit/nuv062. Accessed 21 Jan. 2020.

The Center Square. "By the Numbers: Mahnomen Ranks the Poorest of Minnesota Counties." *The Center Square*, 2019, https://www.thecentersquare.com/minnesota/by-the-numbers-mahnomen-ranks-the-poorest-of-minnesota-counties/article_2c3345c4-8cba-11e9-bdd9-97ef8dc1e188.html

Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. 2013. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* S.L.: Zed Books Ltd.

Sargent, Mark, and Kelly Siciliano Carter. 1999. *Managing Michigan Wildlife: A Landowners Guide*. *Managing Michigan Wildlife: A Landowners Guide*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan United Conservation Clubs. https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/publications/pdfs/huntingwildlifehabitat/landowners_guide/index.htm.

Siple, Julie. 2011. "A Return to Traditional Foods Helps Some Fight Hunger on White Earth Reservation." *MPR News*. 2011. https://www.mprnews.org/story/2011/10/03/traditional-foods-hunger-white-earth-reservation.

Stray Dog Institute. 2022. "What Is the Difference between Food Apartheid and Food Deserts?" *Stray Dog Institute*. May 19, 2022. https://straydoginstitute.org/food-apartheid/.

U.S. Census Bureau. "My Tribal Area." *Www.census.gov*, 2021, www.census.gov/tribal/?st=27&aianihh=4595. Accessed 30 Apr. 2023.

United States Department of Agriculture. 2022. "Recent Trends in GE Adoption." United States Department of Agriculture. 2022. https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/adoption-of-genetically-engineered-crops-in-the-u-s/recent-trends-in-ge-adoption.

Vizenor, Gerald. 2008. *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. University of Nebraska Press.

Warne, Donald, and Siobhan Wescott. 2019. "Social Determinants of American Indian Nutritional Health." Current Developments in Nutrition 3 (August): nzz054. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdn/nzz054

Washington, Karen. n.d. "FAQ." Karen Washington. Accessed April 12, 2023. https://www.karenthefarmer.com/faq-index.

Webkamigad, Sharlene, Sheila Cote-Meek, Birgit Pianosi, and Kristen Jacklin. 2020. "Exploring the Appropriateness of Culturally Safe Dementia Information with Indigenous People in an Urban Northern Ontario Community." *Canadian Journal on Aging / La Revue Canadienne Du Vieillissement* 39 (2). Cambridge University Press: 235–46. doi:10.1017/S0714980819000606.

White Earth Economic Development Office. 2013. "White Earth Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy." *White Earth Nation.* https://whiteearth.com/assets/files/economic%20development/CEDS%20Update%202013.pdf.

Wilson, Shawn. 2008. *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Black Point, N.S.: Fernwood Pub.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. n.d. "Wild Rice Harvesting." Wisconsin DNR. https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/rice.html.

White Earth Food Sovereignty Initiative. 2020. "White Earth Band of Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Food Sovereignty Initiative Strategic Plan." *White Earth Nation*. https://whiteearth.com/assets/files/natural%20resources/2020WEFSI-StrategicPlan.pdf.