

Mazina'igan Supplement

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Ricing with Tommy Sky A Sequel to Growing Up Ojibwe





Ricers carefully make their way through the wild rice bed in the Kakagon River on the Bad River Reservation.

Boozhoo (Hello)! My name is Tommy Sky. My Ojibwe name is makoons, meaning bear cub. I live on the Bad River Reservation in northern Wisconsin. In Ojibwe my reservation is known as Mashkiziibii, which means Swamp River. The northern boundaries of the Bad River Reservation border Lake Superior, or Gichigami (big lake) in the Ojibwe language.

Two important rivers flow through our reservation and form wetlands, sometimes called *sloughs*. These rivers flow into Lake Superior, so are known as Lake Superior *tributaries*. They have long been very important rivers to my people, who came here from the East a long, long time ago. According to



Ricing sticks, usually made of cedar, are used to loosen the rice kernels from the rice stalk. The rice stalk is gently bent over the canoe with one stick and knocked into the bottom of the canoe with the other. Sometimes this is called "knocking" rice, and the rice sticks called "knockers."





our stories, the people were looking for the food that grows upon the water, and it was here that they found wild rice, known in Ojibwe as manoomin (pronounced like man-new-min).

Manoomin also grows in other northern rivers and in the shallow waters of inland lakes, but it has always been very plentiful in the Kakagon Sloughs. Our people have carefully watched the wild rice crop each season as far back as even my great, great, great, great grandparents, Dad says. That's many generations.

Wild rice is still very important to us and is a very tasty food that is good for you. For us, manoomin is always served as part of special, *traditional* feasts and ceremonies, like at feasts for our pow-wow or for burials or our Thanksgiving feasts. Have you ever tasted wild rice?

I am going to take you along ricing with our family. We go ricing every year in the early fall when the manoomin is ready, usually late August or early September. It is hard to say exactly when because our rice chiefs (elders who watch the rice) will say when the rice is ready, but I know because it is close to the time school starts. It's also when our tribe holds its Manoomin Pow-wow, which is really fun! Sometime I will take you to our pow-wow—a great gathering with many drums and dancers in beautiful dance outfits.

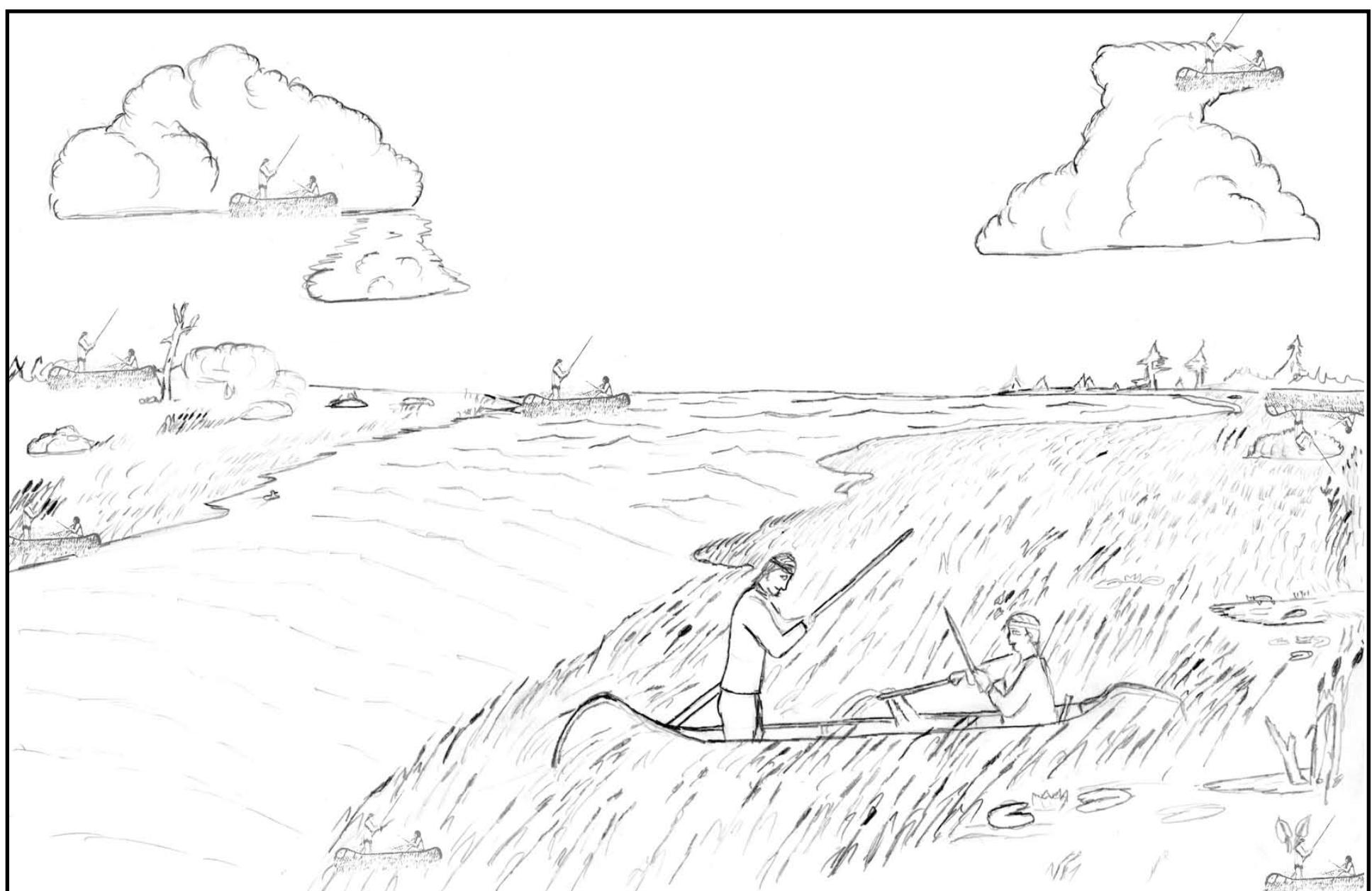
Where the rice grows in the river is known as the rice bed. If people go in before the rice is ready, it is hard to knock the rice off the *stalk*, but if you go in too late, much of the rice may have already dropped into the water, especially if you get high winds or a big storm.



Long ago the Ojibwe would set up camps by their favorite rice beds and spend weeks there gathering and processing the rice.

My dad says you want some of the rice to fall into the river so the rice will reseed itself and keep the rice bed thick and full of rice, and you also want the waterfowl to have their share. We can't take it all and must think about future ricers and the animals and birds who also *rely* on manoomin for food.

My sister and I only get to go out in our canoe ricing for one day each season. Dad takes us out, usually in the morning before it gets too hot, and we take turns knocking rice while Dad poles the canoe. Before we start, Dad puts asemaa (tobacco) in the water to be thankful for the rice. You push or pole the canoe through the rice beds with a long pole often made from tamarac, cedar or pine. You don't use paddles, like normal canoeing, or a motor because it can damage the rice.



There are eight ricing boats hidden in this picture, see if you can find them all. The answers are on page 11.



Mom and son learn how to carve cedar rice sticks during a special conference about wild rice in 2006.

Wild rice is a very *delicate* crop, and Dad says propellers on motors can tear up the rice, and paddles also reach out into the rice itself damaging the stalks. So, the canoes or slender boats are just pushed slowly through the rice by one person standing up in the back with a pole that is long enough to reach the bottom. That person is usually Dad. I have tried it, and it is tiring after a while! The other person sits in the boat and knocks the rice using two ricing sticks. In the old days they used ricing paddles. They were flat and rounded. Today, ricing sticks, also called knockers,

The Migration Story: In Search of Wild Rice

For the Anishinaabe, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa, the Megis Shell played an important role in their migration from the St. Lawrence Sea Way area.

According to the Ojibwe, each major stopping point during the Anishinaabe migration would be marked by the appearance of the Sacred Megis Shell. The Ojibwe people were to follow the direction of the Megis Shell and by doing so would find their final destination; a place identifiable because it was where “food grows on water.”

After centuries of following the Sacred Megis Shell’s appearance, the Anishinaabe were eventually led to Northern Minnesota where they found manoomin (wild rice) growing on water.

(Reprinted from www.turtle-island.com)



**My friend is ricing for the first time.
Can you help her get through the tall stalks of rice?**

are usually made from cedar because cedar is a very light-weight wood. The sticks are shaped like really big *tapered* candles about two and a half feet long. You use one stick to gently bend the rice stalks over the canoe and the other stick to tap the rice so the ripened rice will fall into the bottom of the canoe.

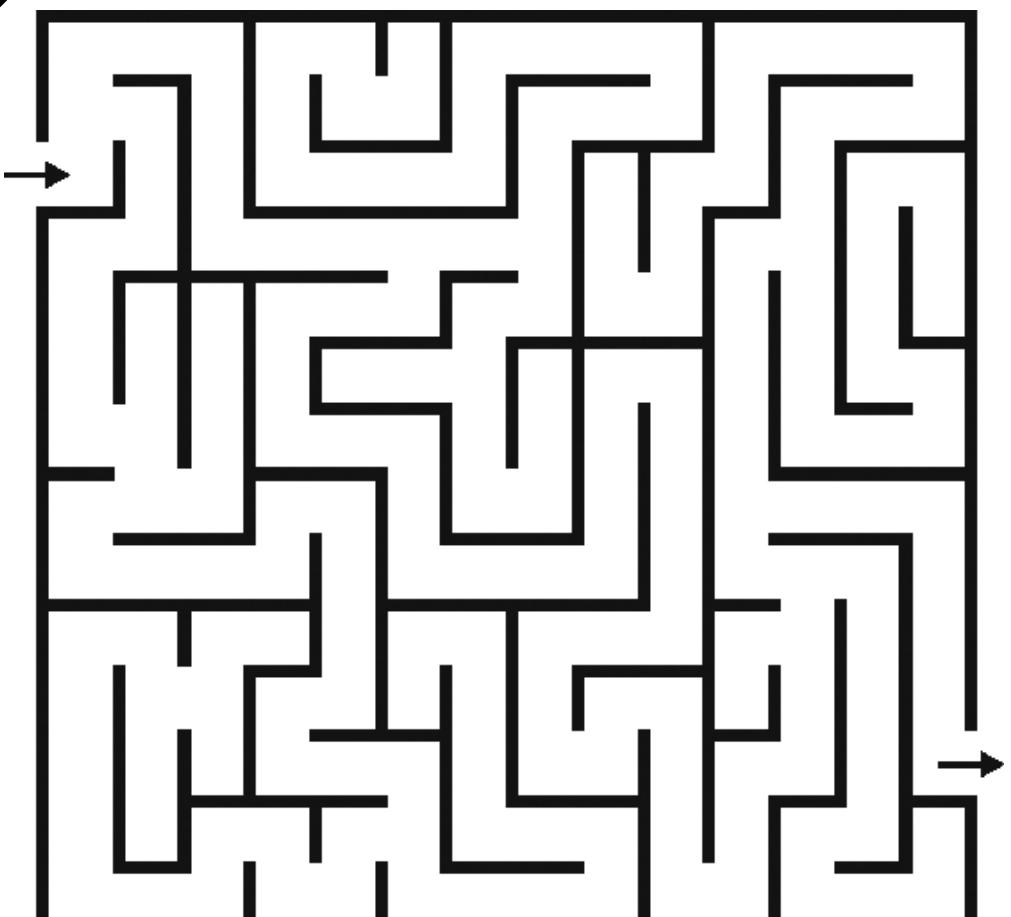
As you go slowly through the bed, the person knocking has to keep their sticks moving, bending and knocking rice on both sides of the canoe. So, there’s lots of arm work involved in harvesting manoomin!! It’s work, and it’s usually hot, but for me it’s fun work.

My little sister doesn’t like it as much as I do. She screams if a rice worm falls on her, and I have to pick it off of her. She’s also really, really slow at knocking rice and misses a lot. It’s hard to sit there and watch, so I keep asking Dad if it’s my turn again, please. Then she whines and gets her way. I told Dad we would be better going without her, but he says she needs to learn how to rice too, and I guess he’s right. It’s just frustrating, but I guess he probably felt that way about me when I was just learning. Actually, Mom and Dad go out several times together on weekends, and they bring in a lot of rice quickly.

Being out in the rice beds is really cool. It is like going through a jungle with tall, waving rice all around the boat, hiding everything but the person standing with the pole. We usually see several eagles (migiziwag) soaring above in search of fish (giigonyike), and we scare up a great blue heron (zhashagi) or two. I’ve seen all sorts of ducks (zhiishiibag) out there and also muskrat (wazhashk) and a couple of otters (nigigwag).

Some people take a lot of rice each year, then *process* it and sell part of it, but we just gather enough to process and have for the year. Mom always cooks it up for Thanksgiving and Christmas meals for sure and whenever we have company. She also makes wild rice soups during the winter, which are really yummy, filling soups when you are cold and hungry.

Gathering the rice off the river is only one part of ricing. Actually, there is a lot of work to preparing the rice to be eaten and stored. Manoomin can be stored for very long periods of time if processed right. Before we had refrigerators and freezers, our people dried and stored many foods to keep them through the long winters. Rice was always one of them.





Animals you may see when ricing



blue heron



eagle



ducks



otter

Fill in the blanks with the Ojibwe name for these birds and mammals. Names can be found on page 4.

blue heron _____

eagles _____

ducks _____

otters _____

muskrat _____



muskrat

A long time ago, people would set up camps by their favorite rice beds and spend weeks there gathering and processing rice. Our family still uses the old, traditional ways, mainly so those skills don't get totally forgotten, my dad says. But other people now use machines for some parts of the preparation. The idea is to get the small, tender *kernels* out of their husks without breaking them. Also, we don't set up a rice camp down by the river like my grandparents did. We just bring it to our backyard, where we have our own rice camp. Of course, it's easier today to get from the river to home because we have cars and four-wheelers. I can see why they used to stay right there when people depended on walking to get from place to place.

Rice camp in our backyard is fun. Sometimes we even set up our camping tents and sleep out, just for the fun of it and neighbors stop by, grab a chair and swap stories with Mom and Dad while we kids play if we don't have to work right then. Mom always has coffee on for visitors and lots of snacks around.

So, here are some of the important steps you have to do to prepare manoomin once you have brought it in from the river or lake:

1. Dry it
2. Parch it
3. Dance it
4. Winnow it

(Continued on page 8)

Circle these words related to ricing in the word search below?

campfire
canoe
culture
dance

dry
knockers
Ojibwe
paddle

parch
pole
wildrice
winnow

K	P	G	P	A	T	C	G	U	D	O	E
E	N	A	R	J	D	A	N	C	E	O	C
W	L	O	R	F	E	M	Q	F	N	U	P
O	S	D	C	C	Z	P	O	A	L	M	O
N	C	H	D	K	H	F	C	T	F	B	L
N	W	R	H	A	E	I	U	F	I	X	E
I	D	K	C	Y	P	R	R	A	Y	C	F
W	M	G	G	T	E	E	S	H	C	H	G
E	W	B	I	J	O	D	Y	A	L	D	Q
A	O	Z	M	L	J	P	O	R	R	P	F
W	I	L	D	R	I	C	E	Y	A	S	L
B	R	K	K	K	G	D	J	K	V	S	X

Traditional harvesting and preparation of manoomin



Green kernels on a stalk of wild rice will ripen and provide a nutritious source of food for humans as well as various wildlife who live in wetland areas. Once very abundant around the Great Lakes, many wild rice beds have been destroyed by development around lakes and rivers.



Harvesting manoomin – Because the plant is delicate, those who harvest manoomin take care not to break or tear up wild rice beds when they gather wild rice. They “pole” slim canoes and boats through the rice beds because motors and wakes made by motors tear up the beds.



Green rice (left photo) – The manoomin kernels are gently knocked into the bottom of a canoe or boat using two ricing sticks. The green rice is then taken ashore and spread out to dry. Dried rice (right photo) – After drying in the sun, the manoomin turns a light brown and is ready to be parched or stored for later processing.



Parching manoomin – The husks of rice are parched in a large, heavy duty pot over a fire. Stirring and careful watching is needed to make sure the rice does not burn. Once the husks are very dry and brittle, they crack open easily.



Dancing rice is when the parched rice is placed in a large bucket or pit and gently danced on to break open the husks and free the rice kernels.

Manoomin

By Jim Northrup, Fond du Lac Ojibwe

Tobacco swirled in the lake
as we offered our thanks.
The calm water welcomed us
rice heads nodded in agreement.
Ricing again, mii gwech Manido.
The cedar caressed the heads
ripe rice came along to join us
in many meals this winter.
The rice bearded up.
We saw the wind move across the lake
an eagle, a couple of coots
the sun smiled everywhere.
Relatives came together
talk of other lakes, other seasons
fingers stripping rice while
laughing, gossiping, remembering.
Its easy to feel a part of
the generations that have
riced here before.
It felt good to get on the lake
it felt better getting off
carrying a canoe load of food
and centuries of memories.

Winnowing the rice – Wind is used to remove the light, dried husks from the kernels. The rice is put into a winnowing basket and gently tossed. The wind will take the husks, leaving only the rice kernels.



Finished manoomin – Once the husks and chaff are removed, the manoomin is ready to cook and serve or store for later use. Both delicious and nutritious, manoomin can be served as a main course, side dish, in soups or salads.



(Continued from page 5)

The first step is easy. We just spread out a big tarp and spread the green rice on the tarp in the sun to dry, turning it every so often. As the air dries it, the rice gradually turns a light brown color. Once dried, it can be bagged and stored to process later if you can't do it right away. If you don't dry it well, it will mold in the bag, and you will have to throw it away.

For the second step, *parching*, we need a big metal pot, a campfire and a rice paddle. You put some of the dried rice into the big, heavy-duty pot over a slow burning fire and parch the dried husks making them very brittle and easy to crack. You have to watch the pot carefully and keep moving the rice around with the paddle, otherwise it will burn and the kernel inside will be wrecked. The smell of the rice being parched makes the whole camp smell good, and sometimes the rice kind of pops, like popcorn, and we can have a snack. But be careful, you don't want a burned flavor to your wild rice.

Once it is parched, and the husks are very, very dry and crack easily, you "dance" the rice. My sister and I usually do this part. The rice is put into a pit in the ground that has a clean tarp in it. The dried, parched rice is placed in the pit and a person with clean moccasins gently treads on the husks—not hard, just lightly—breaking the husks to free

the rice kernels—a lot of leg work. It's sort of like being on my mom's treadmill, but you have to be very gentle. Usually a type of arm rest is put up so the dancer can rest their arms on it while dancing the rice. This is tiring and boring, and my little sister doesn't do it very long, so I get a good work out.



To dry freshly harvested manoomin it is spread out on a large tarp on the ground so the sun will dry it. Somebody usually keeps turning the rice so it dries well on all sides.

Wild rice recipes

Here are some fun and great tasting recipes for you to share with your parents. Please be sure to have an adult help you.

Popped wild rice

Popped wild rice can be used in a salad instead of croutons, or as a garnish on soups, and casseroles. Not all wild rice will pop successfully. The best wild rice to use is hand processed wild rice that usually has more moisture left in each kernel, which will expand when heated.

Place about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of oil in a small, shallow pan with a small strainer set in the oil. Heat at high temperature until oil is about 450° F. Drop one rice kernel into the strainer. When it sizzles, cracks open and expands to about double its length, the oil is ready. (You may wish to reduce the heat temporarily.) Add 1 tablespoon of rice at a time to the oil.

When all the kernels have expanded (which constitutes the popping), empty the strainer onto a paper towel. Repeat, adjusting heat as necessary. Crisp popped rice may be seasoned with salt, pepper, and mixed herbs to enhance the flavor. This popped rice can be made in large quantities and stored in a sealed container for several weeks.



Manoomin or wild rice grows in shallow water so is usually at the edge of rivers and lakes.

Serving tips

1. Always wash the rice thoroughly before cooking. Run water through the rice until it runs clear.
2. The more uncooked rice is washed, the milder the flavor. If the rice is to be cooked further as a part of another recipe, it is better that it be a little under-cooked.
3. The addition of butter or margarine to the cooked rice seems to keep it firm.
4. Wild rice can usually be substituted for white or brown rice.
5. When using wild rice in a dressing, do not pack the stuffing into the cavity of the bird or fish; rather, stuff lightly.

Basic wild rice

Wash one cup of wild rice and place in a saucepan or kettle and cover with one quart of water. Add two level teaspoons of salt and bring to boil. Turn heat down, cover, and let simmer until the rice is well "flowered."

Baked venison with wild rice

1 cup wild rice	1 can (26 oz.) tomato soup
2 pounds venison	1 can water
1 can tomatoes	1 cup celery, chopped
1 onion, sliced	salt and pepper
1 green pepper, sliced	

Prepare basic wild rice recipe (above).

Cut venison into individual servings. Mix together all ingredients and place in baking dish. Submerge venison in wild rice-tomato bed.

Bake in medium oven 325° for two hours.

Wild rice and wild berries

1/2 c. wild rice	1 c. blueberries
1 small can crushed pineapple	4 tbsp. sugar
1 c. raspberries or strawberries	whipped cream for topping

Prepare basic wild rice recipe, chill.

Combine all ingredients and serve with whipped cream topping.



Once this is done, the rice is ready to be *winnowed*. Large, shallow birch bark baskets called winnowing baskets are used. Winnowing separates the kernels from the husks. The rice is placed in the basket on a day with a light wind and then gently tossed into the air. The wind will carry away the very light empty husks, leaving just the kernels—the final product, called finished rice. Then the rice is finally ready to be bagged and stored, and we are ready for winter. We have REAL wild rice.

Real wild rice

Some of you have probably seen wild rice in the store or being sold at stands along the roadside. Usually this is what is known as paddy rice and does not grow naturally in the wild like ours does. It tastes different, looks different and does not have that wild, sort of nutty taste to it. It is paddy rice. It's thick, blacker and the kernels are harder. Mom says it takes a lot longer to cook, and sometimes you have to soak it.

Paddy rice is planted like a big crop for sale in stores. It is not hand-harvested like our naturally grown rice, but harvested and processed with huge machines.

REAL wild rice, manoomin, is usually light to dark brown in color, sometimes with a little bit of green in it, and Mom says it really doesn't take long to cook at all. I've had paddy rice in restaurants, and it's o.k. but it doesn't compare to the REAL stuff.

Of course, the real stuff is hard to get. Manoomin has always grown naturally in northern Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan waters, so is a *native* (not coming from somewhere else) plant to only our area! Also, Dad says many of the rice beds we once had were ruined when people began to build lots of houses and cabins around the lakes. Often they would pull the wild rice right out of the water so boats could get through or to make a swimming area in front of cabins. Dams have also been very hard on rice beds by changing the water level. Motorboats with propellers rip up the rice, and big wakes from speed boats can also hurt the rice. At Bad River we have a "No Wake" area in the Kakagon Sloughs near the rice beds to protect the rice plants.



At Bad River we have a "No Wake" area in the Kakagon Sloughs near the rice beds to protect the rice plants.

Tribes have been trying to reseed some of the old riceing lakes now, so Dad says some of those rice beds now have rice again. I think that's a good thing.

This year both my mom (nimaamaa) and dad (imbaabaa) were really upset about the Kakagon rice beds being hurt by the low water level in Lake Superior. Everybody on the rez (that's what we call the reservation) was talking about it this spring. When the ice went out, it showed a large section of the Kakagon Slough bone dry! That is a big part of our rice beds, so everybody is worried.

Listening to Mom and Dad talk to neighbors, they say the *drought* probably caused part of this problem, but there are other things that may also be adding to the problem. Guess the water level is low all through the lake causing other problems too. I'd sure be sad if our rice beds dried up. We need that manoomin and have worked hard to protect it since we first came to the region hundreds of years ago.

I like the feeling when I am ricing that I am doing what my nookomis (grandma) and nimishoois (grandpa) and their parents used to do. Its like I get a feeling of the past and that I am part of carrying on an important tradition. Someday, I would like my kids to do the same.



Surveying wild rice in an inland lake, a wild rice aid with the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission measures a stalk of rice. Surveys of some wild rice beds are done every summer to check for the size of the plants and how thick the beds are with rice.



Lakes where manoomin used to grow or where small beds are being restored are sometimes re-seeded. They are seeded by throwing freshly harvested rice into the water where you want the rice to grow.



Vocabulary words

(These are words used in the text, many have other or slightly different meanings as well. The definitions are taken from Webster Online.)

Slough—a place of deep mud or mire like a swamp or an inlet on a river, also a creek in a marsh or tide flat. Example: Sloughs are important wetlands and are home to many ducks and geese.

Tributaries—streams or rivers feeding a larger stream or a lake. Example: Many small tributaries feed the Mississippi River.

Generation—the average span of time between the birth of parents and that of their children; people in a similar age group. Example: The 60s generation refers to people who graduated from high school in the 1960s.

Traditional—an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (as a religious practice or a social custom); a belief or story or a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are commonly accepted as historical, though not always provable. Example: It is our family's tradition to eat turkey on Thanksgiving Day.

Stalk—a slender upright object or supporting or connecting part; a part of a plant (as a petiole or stipe) that supports another. Example: Each corn *stalk* had two to three ears of corn on it.

Rely—to be dependent upon something. Example: We *rely* on water to live.

Delicate—easily torn or damaged, fragile; requiring careful handling; easily unsettled or upset. Example: He held the butterfly carefully so he would not hurt the *delicate* wings.

Taper—slowly getting smaller in thickness or width in an elongated object; a gradual decrease. Example: A needle *tapers* to a fine point.

Process—series of actions or operations to produce something; a continuous operation or treatment especially in manufacture. Example: The beekeeper showed us the *process* of producing honey, starting at the beehive and ending with a shiny jar of honey on our table.

Kernel—a fruit seed; the inner softer part of a seed, fruit stone, or nut; a whole seed of a cereal. Example: The *kernels* of corn are bright yellow.

Parch—to toast under dry heat; to shrivel with heat. Example: Most plants become *parched* in the desert and cannot live there.

Winnow—to remove by a current of air; to get rid of something, usually something unwanted; to treat (as grain) by exposure to a current of air so that waste matter is removed. Example: Before being ground into flour, the old husks of grain (chaff) needed to be *winnowed* from the wheat kernels.

Native—belonging to a particular place by birth, like being *native* to Wisconsin if you were born in the state; living or growing naturally in a particular region as in wild rice is *native* to northern Wisconsin; relating to, or being a member of an aboriginal people of North or South America as in *Native American*.

Drought—a period of dryness especially when it is a long dry spell; a dry spell that causes extensive damage to crops or prevents their successful growth. Example: All the pumpkins were small this year due to the *drought*.

An Ojibwe legend

Retold by Heather Cardinal and Becky Maki

Editor's note: Waynaboozhoo also known as Nanaboozhoo is the central figure in many oral Ojibwe stories. Some describe him as part human and part spirit. He is like the original man and is often a trickster getting into trouble or making trouble for the animals and people around him. But he is also a teacher and guide.

Waynaboozhoo was worried about what his people would eat during the long winter months. For several winters there had been very little food and the people had suffered.

Waynaboozhoo wanted to put a stop to the suffering, so he went into the woods and fasted for four days in a wigwam. On the fourth day he started on a long walk, and as he walked, he thought about how to keep his people from starving. He continued walking until he came to the edge of a river. By that time, he was very tired, so he lay down to rest and fell asleep.

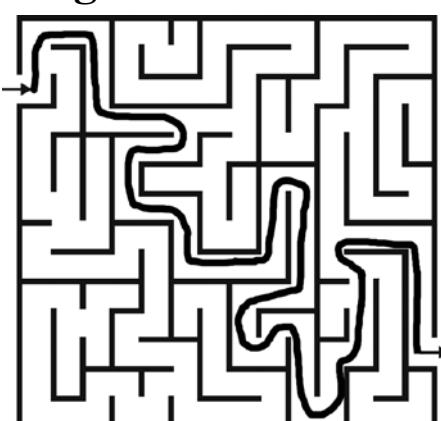
Waynaboozhoo awoke late in the night when the moon was high in the sky. He walked along the edge of the river and saw what looked like dancers in the water. Waynaboozhoo thought he saw the feathers of the headdresses worn by Ojibwe men. He walked a little closer and asked if he could dance along. He danced and danced until he grew tired. He lay down and fell asleep again.

The next morning when he awoke everything was calm. Waynaboozhoo remembered the dancers but thought it all had been a dream. Then he looked out at the tassels waving above the water. He waded out and found long seeds that hung from these tassels. He gathered some of these seeds in the palm of his hand and carried them with him back to his wigwam. There he continued fasting.

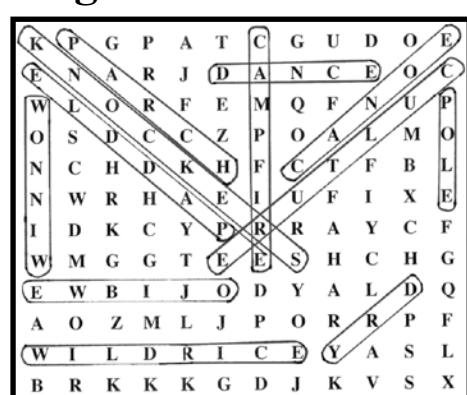
Once again he grew tired and fell asleep, and as he slept, he had a vision. In the vision he learned that he had gathered wild rice and that it was to be eaten. He tasted the rice and found that it was good. Waynaboozhoo returned to the village and told his people about the rice. Together, they harvested enough to provide food for the long winter.

Answers

Page 4



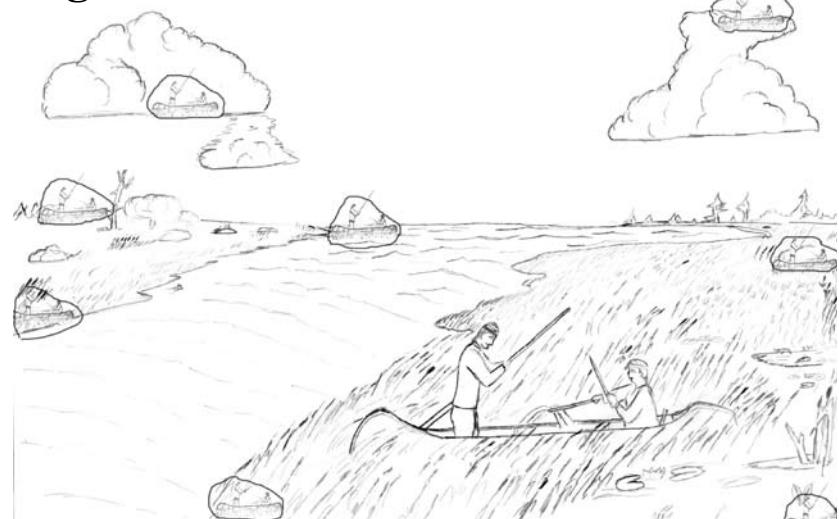
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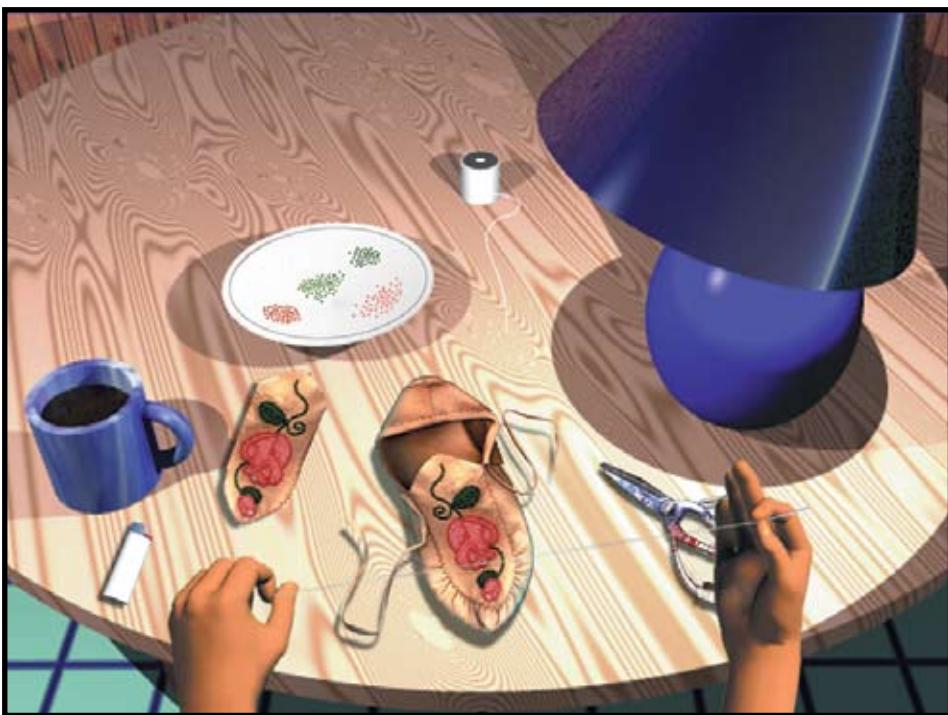
1. Bad River
2. manoomin
3. bed
4. use paddles or a motor
5. reseed
6. cedar
7. parching
8. dance
9. paddy
10. native

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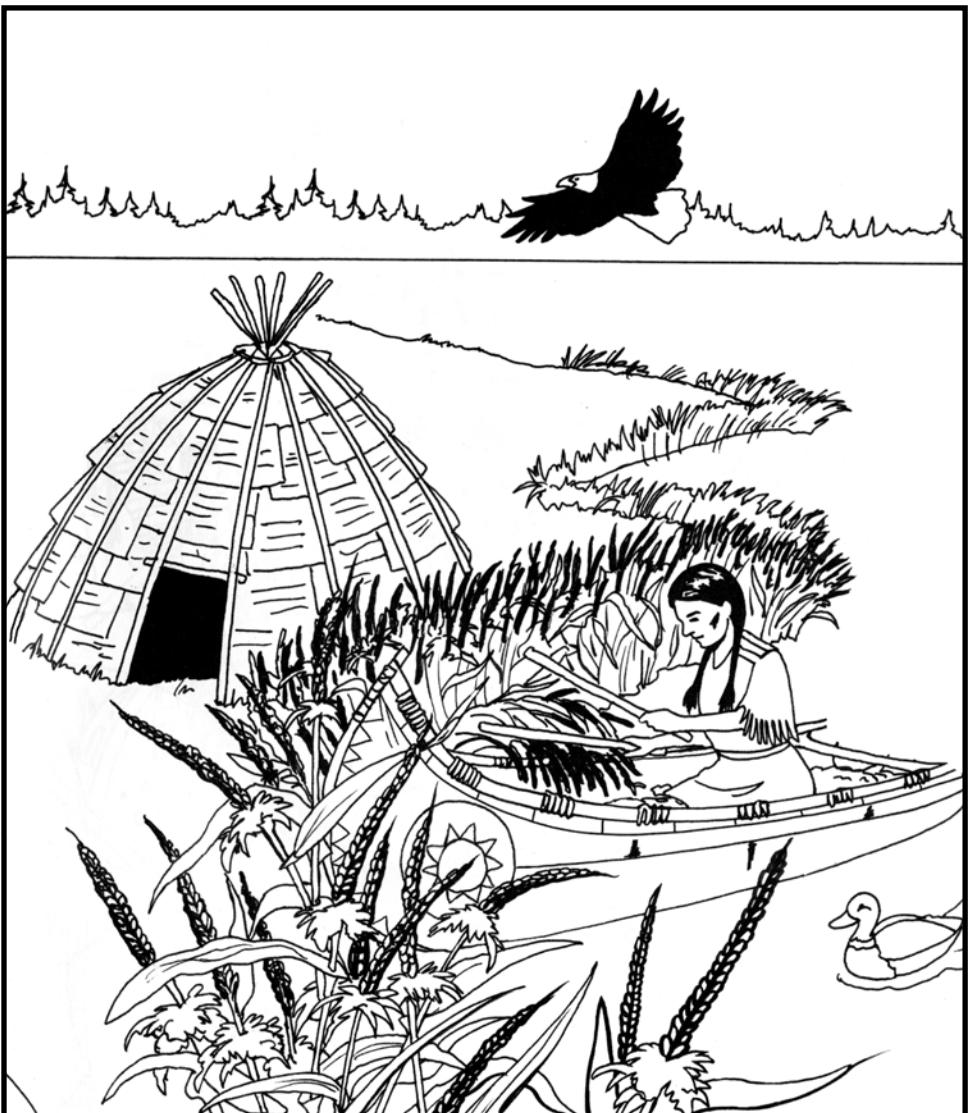




You can hear the jingle dress dancers come when it is their turn in the Grand Entry of a pow-wow. All kinds of dancers take part at the opening of a pow-wow during the Grand Entry.



Preparing dance outfits takes many long hours of sewing. Above, a pair of moccasins are being beaded with an Ojibwe floral pattern.



Color the ricing picture.

The Legend of Nanaboozhoo

One evening Nanaboozhoo returned from hunting, but he had no game. As he came toward his fire, he saw a duck sitting on the edge of his kettle of boiling water.

After the duck flew away, Nanaboozhoo looked into the kettle and found wild rice floating upon the water, but he did not know what it was. He ate his supper from the kettle, and it was the best soup he had ever tasted.

Later, he followed in the direction the duck had taken, and came to a lake full of manoomin:wild rice. He saw all kinds of ducks and geese and mud hens, and all the other water birds eating the grain. After that, when Nanaboozhoo did not kill a deer, he knew where to find food to eat.



A young grass dancer is ready to dance. The long strands of yarn on his outfit are supposed to look like long grass.



Now let's see what you learned!!!

- 1.) Tommy Sky lives on the _____ reservation.
- 2.) The food that grows on water is called _____ in Ojibwe.
- 3.) A large field of wild rice is called a wild rice _____.
- 4.) When gathering wild rice you use poles to move your boat or canoe never _____.
- 5.) To return wild rice to lakes that once had rice beds we _____ the lake.
- 6.) Ricing sticks are made from a lightweight wood called _____.
- 7.) Heating the wild rice until the husks are dried and cracking is called _____ the rice.
- 8.) To crack the dried husks open, you _____ the rice.
- 9.) Rice specially planted like a crop to sell in stores is known as _____ rice.
- 10.) Wild rice is a _____ plant, which only grows in northern Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan.



A ricer's moccasins emerge from freshly harvested manoomin that settled to the bottom of a canoe.

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If you enjoyed this supplement, the original **Growing Up Ojibwe** and the first sequel "**Iskigamizigan (Sugarbush)**" are still available through GLIFWC.



Goodbye, see you next year.