Navigating Indigenous Futures on the Mississippi River brings together the work of UMN researchers and their Indigenous community partners involved in two separate UMN Grand Challenge Grant Projects.

Honored and thrilled to host an informational site visit as part of President Joan Gabel’s Inaugural Week celebration, the two teams use the opportunity to advance ongoing dialogue among themselves and share tangible components of their experiences in doing engaged research with Minnesota’s Indigenous Dakota, Ojibwe, and Native Pacific Islander Tribal communities.

We are especially motivated to seize the moment to bring our partners to campus, and to the river in particular, for a day-long gathering in order to continue to explore the river as it meanders through our beautiful campus. Not only a compelling site, the Mississippi River is a profoundly important being - a relative - around whose care and stewardship we might also imagine and build strong research, teaching, and learning relations with the region’s First Peoples and other displaced Indigenous communities.

### Agenda For Gathering

11:00am-2:00pm

UMN classes arrive and co-learn at EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING STATIONS (Youth Studies, American Indian Studies, Computer Science, Law, Forest Resources, Earth and Environmental Sciences)

- Experiential Learning Stations
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) area
- Virtual reality canoe navigation
- Catalyst and canoe displays
- Dakota canoe carving practice area
- Culture vs. Cultivation: New Models of Manoomin Research
- Ojibwe rice knocking sticks, drumming, and natural resource management
- Canoeing expeditions on the river

3:30pm-4:00pm

Reflections and closing of the day

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**INTRODUCTION**

Navigating Indigenous Futures on the Mississippi River brings together the work of UMN researchers and their Indigenous community partners involved in two separate UMN Grand Challenge Grant Projects.

The projects are described below.

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Navigating Indigenous Futures

Experiencing Research Collaborations Between Two Grand Challenge Grant Projects and Their Dakota, Ojibwe, and Pacific Islander Partners

Back to Indigenous Futures

“In a field of tall grass, with only the wind for company, there is a language that transcends the differences between scientific and traditional understandings, the data or the prayer.”

--Robin Kimmerer, Potawatomi botanist, in Braiding Sweetgrass (2014)

Back to Indigenous Futures heeds Kimmerer’s plea for alternative ways of apprehending the world around us, modes that can recognize and go beyond the violent histories that favor systems that know only in terms of data over deeper and older indigenous knowledge systems that are often also expressed through prayer. Addressing two Grand Challenge goals -- enhancing individual and community capacity for a changing world and fostering just & equitable societies – the project partners with Upper and Lower Sioux Dakota communities as they themselves partner with migrant Pacific islanders from Micronesia, now residing in rural west Minnesota, in a shared effort to revitalize their respective cultural traditions and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) about watercraft and water-related ceremonies, rituals, and practices. Centering indigenous and decolonial values and principles, and deploying participatory action research methods, Back to Indigenous Futures integrates the work of humanities and humanistic social and applied sciences in American Indian and Global Indigenous studies with participatory action for TEK preservation, teaching, and research in both Architecture and Computer Science to design mixed reality experiences that integrate physical architecture with virtual embodied simulations of canoes in water, waves, and wind while also assisting in community-identified needs. Sensing the potential impact on teaching, practice, and research within these disciplines as just as important as the products, we ask, how might TEK-integrated teaching and research lead to more socially conscious and equitable designers, technologies, engineers, scientists, and scholars, and also make our work beneficial for indigenous community? This project has potential to cast the University of Minnesota into the winds of national and international leadership in research through indigenous community-based partnership at the interphase of computer science, design, humanities, indigenous environmentalism and community and nation-building.

https://catalyst.dash.umn.edu/Wordpress/

Kawe Gidaa Naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin

First We Must Consider Manoomin / Psiη (Wild Rice)

Overview

Manoomin (Ojibwe) (psiη (Dakota), wild rice, Zizania spp.), Minnesota’s state grain, is central to both diet and cultural identity for many Native peoples around the Great Lakes. Manoomin is sensitive to environmental stressors, and thus serves as a flagship for protecting ecosystems and Indigenous resource sovereignty. Manoomin also has been a flashpoint in policy and water regulation in the State of Minnesota. The marginalization of Tribal views in policy has been ubiquitous; protecting Tribal resource sovereignty requires a culturally responsible, whole ecosystem approach to environmental stewardship and is a Grand Challenge faced in Minnesota, the Great Lakes Region, and throughout the world.

Tribally Centered Collaborative Research

The project uses a collaborative approach to researching and supporting sustainable ecosystems. Our project emphasizes partnership building and prioritizes Tribal values, knowledge, and needs throughout the entire research cycle. The team has examined:

(1) how cultural worldviews, social institutions, and ecosystem governance systems influence the generation, transmission, and use of ecological knowledge in healing and protecting manoomin ecosystems; (2) how research on manoomin ecosystems can be improved by interfacing biophysical science disciplines with Indigenous knowledge and practices; and (3) how academic institutions and federal, state, and Tribal agencies can jointly develop policies that account for multiple cultural worldviews and incentivize sovereignty-based approaches to manoomin research and management.

Our interdisciplinary research team spans five UMN colleges and includes partnerships with four Minnesota and Wisconsin Bands and three intertribal organizations. We have also hosted discussions with other Tribes throughout Minnesota and across the Great Lakes region. Through these collaborations, this project has generated new understandings of the co-production of ecological knowledge and policy among Tribes, academic researchers, and state agencies. This project is helping to establish the University of Minnesota as a leader in this arena. More broadly, it serves as a flagship for discourses of whole ecosystem sustainability and Indigenous resource sovereignty.

https://manoominpsin-gc.dash.umn.edu/