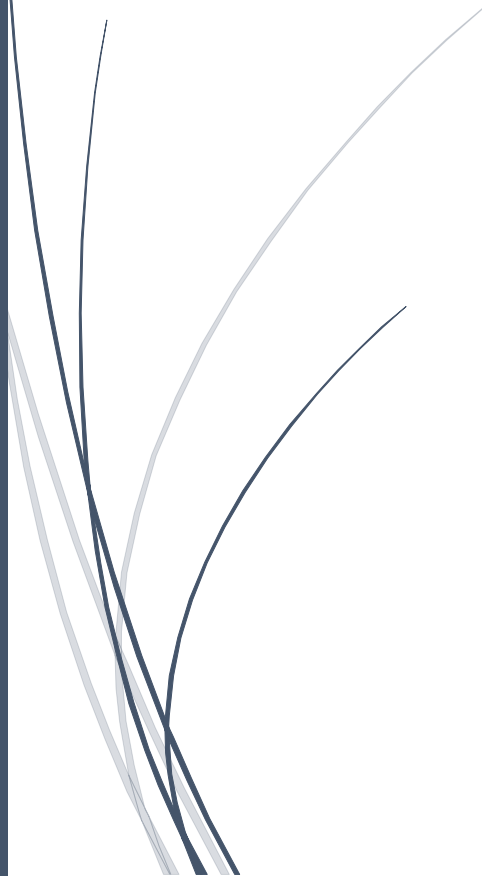




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Culturally Sensitive Field Protocol

The Manomin Project



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Executive Summary

This field protocol was developed to guide respectful, ethical and culturally sensitive research activities in the project, *Intensifying manomin (Zizania palustris) growth in environments altered by colonial settlement in ways that are responsive to Anishinaabe knowledge and values* (herein referred to as the Manomin Project). The Manomin Project, funded by George Weston Ltd., aims to integrate environmental data retrieved by University of Guelph (UofG) researchers with cultural and ecological knowledge from Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation with the objective of restoring Manomin (commonly known in English as “wild rice”) on the Upper Winnipeg River. At present, the Research Ethics Board at UofG does not recognize Manomin as a spirit being like the Anishinabeg do. Due to differences in cultural beliefs and ways of knowing, it was essential to the project that a culturally sensitive field protocol be developed to sustain a healthy and respectful relationship between UofG researchers, Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation (NAN), and Manomin (a non-human collaborator).

The research project will involve two types of field work: (1) knowledge sharing with Knowledge Keepers from NAN, and (2) environmental data collection on the Upper Winnipeg River. Both require UofG researchers to ensure they are knowledgeable of culturally appropriate ways to interact on Anishinaabe territory. This protocol includes requirements for individuals to prepare for entering the field, materials needed, and a descriptive protocol of when and how to engage in culturally appropriate research practices.

When working with NAN it is important that UofG researchers are well acquainted with ethical research with human participants, culturally appropriate vocabulary, and the historical context of Treaty #3. Additionally, prior to arriving at NAN UofG researchers must prepare tobacco offerings for Knowledge Keepers, bring blankets, food, and water, and ensure all Knowledge Keepers are given an honorarium for their time. Whenever UofG researchers are looking to engage in a knowledge sharing relationship with NAN, they must offer a small amount of tobacco wrapped in cloth to the Knowledge Keepers. Acceptance of the tobacco signifies the Knowledge Keeper is willing to enter into this relationship. During outdoor events, a blanket should also be given as a gift to each Knowledge Keeper. In addition to the paid honorarium, UofG researchers need to ensure they provide food and water for the Knowledge Keepers. Food or drink that is not consumed during the interview is to be offered to the Knowledge Keepers who may choose to share it with their families. UofG researchers must be thinking of the care and wellbeing not only of the Knowledge Keepers but of the community as well.

On the Upper Winnipeg River, whether in the presence of NAN Knowledge Keepers or not, UofG researchers operating from a Eurocentric framework must keep an open mind while working in ancestral manomin stands. Manomin is considered a gift from the Creator, and the Anishinabeg have a culturally significant relationship with this other-than-human being. Rather than seeing plants as distinct from humans, the Anishinabeg maintain that we are all connected. UofG researchers should familiarize themselves not only with Manomin and its habitat needs, but also with the Anishinabeg’s relationship with Manomin. Once on the river, UofG researchers should offer tobacco prior to leaving the dock/boat launch to ensure safe passage, and then to Manomin upon entering an ancestral field. If Knowledge Keepers accompany UofG researchers on the river, the same protocols as previously outlined should be followed. UofG researchers

must also minimize their impact on Manomin and its environment. If manomin sampling is required, it is preferable to complete this once the plant is fully matured. Finally, as photography is a common data source in field work, it is important that UofG researchers are aware of what is appropriate and not appropriate to photograph. For example, Knowledge Keepers have not suggested there is any concern with photographing Manomin or ancestral fields; however, photographing pictographs, Anishinaabe burial grounds, and individuals conducting ceremony or prayer is not permissible.

This protocol acts as a guide for UofG researchers to ensure they are participating in culturally sensitive and ethical research activities at NAN and on the Upper Winnipeg River. This protocol, however, should not be considered complete or comprehensive, as it will evolve through the research as UofG researchers learn more from Knowledge Keepers and the sharing relationship deepens. When unsure of what is respectful conduct, it is best to accept guidance from Knowledge Keepers and ask other members of the Manomin Project team. It is the team's hope that this protocol will facilitate a positive relationship between UofG researchers and NAN throughout the Manomin Project.

Note: The Culturally Sensitive Field Protocol focuses on how to gather information. It does not detail our processes for exchanging knowledge between UofG and NAN. Part of this knowledge exchange process involves co-hosting community feasts and collaborative co-creation sessions. A co-creation session refers to a meeting during which UofG researchers present draft responses to community questions for feedback and discussion.

1 Introduction

An instrumental component of the *Intensifying manomin (Zizania palustris) growth in environments altered by colonial settlement in ways that are responsive to Anishinaabe knowledge and values* project (herein referred to as the Manomin Project) is the community engagement and collaboration with Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation. Given the tendency of academic researchers to enter Indigenous communities and impose settler research methodologies, Knowledge Keepers influencing the Manomin Project determined a culturally sensitive field protocol was necessary to ensure Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation's (NAN) values were included in the research methods used. As such, a key deliverable is this culturally sensitive field protocol that was created in collaboration with NAN.

The protocol is broken into two sections, each focusing on a different type of field work. The first being cultural knowledge shared by Knowledge Keepers from NAN, and the second being environmental data collection on the Upper Winnipeg River.

Each section includes details on what the UofG researchers should do to prepare for field work, what materials or equipment are required, and then a series of protocol to follow once in the field.

2 Working with Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation

The Knowledge Keepers of Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation know Manomin and the Upper Winnipeg River. To engage in knowledge sharing relationships with them, UofG researchers must ensure they are well prepared and aware of what is considered culturally appropriate behaviour.

2.1 Preparation

There are several documents, along with some training, UofG researchers should review prior to engaging with NAN to ensure a positive community relationship. This includes the following:

- **Treaty Context:** All UofG researchers should familiarize themselves the history of Crown-Indigenous relations in what is currently known as northwestern Ontario and Treaty #3 (a living document).¹
- **Vocabulary:** All UofG researchers should read blog posts about culturally appropriate word choices available on the Manomin Project’s NiCHE webpage.² There is also a glossary available for internal members to review.
- **Research Ethics:** All UofG researchers should complete the TCPS2 Core course offered by the Canadian tri-agencies. Once completed, they must also review the research ethics board application for the Manomin Project to ensure they are familiar with the protocols outlined. They must also review this document and future iterations to ensure community expectations (not just university expectations) are met.

Additionally, new UofG researchers are encouraged to accept guidance from Knowledge Keepers regarding respectful conduct. They are also encouraged to ask questions to other members of the Manomin Project team regarding field visits prior to visiting NAN.

UofG researchers must prepare tobacco pouches for Knowledge Keepers when working in the community. This involves putting some tobacco (approximately what would fit in a pipe) in a piece of cloth and tying a ribbon to close the pouch. Details regarding how to give a Knowledge Keeper tobacco are provided in the protocol. Knowledge Keepers have expressed a preference for red cloth at NAN; however, any natural material (e.g., cloth, paper, or tissue) will do.

¹ We recommend starting with Brittany Luby, “‘The Department Is Going Back on These Promises’: An Examination of Anishinaabe and Crown Understandings of Treaty,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 30, no. 2 (2010): 203-228; Chelsea Vowel, “Land, Learning, Law, and Treaties,” *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Issues in Canada* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2016), 233-284; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, “Treaties,” *Restructuring the Relationship*, Library and Archives Canada, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples/Pages/final-report.aspx>.

² Some blog posts that will provide UofG researchers with an understanding of culturally appropriate vocabulary include “[Building a Common Vocabulary: A Cornerstone of Community-Engaged Research](#)” and “[Kill the “Indian” and Save the “Wild”: Vocabularies with Political Consequences in Indigenous Studies.](#)”

2.2 Materials

This is a list of materials that UofG researchers may need to bring with them when working with NAN. Not all items are required for each visit, as it depends on the nature of the interaction. Details are provided in the protocol.

- Tobacco
- Ribbon
- Square cloth (preferably red)
- Blanket
- Daily honorarium
- Food and water
- Coffee and lactose-free milk

2.3 Protocol

When working with NAN and community Knowledge Keepers, UofG researchers must do the following:

- Offer tobacco when requesting information, providing the Knowledge Keeper with an opportunity to accept (i.e., enter into the knowledge-sharing relationship) or reject (i.e., decline the request to share knowledge). This is the culturally appropriate step for requesting consent. Sample wording: “I am offering this tobacco with a request that you will support the Manomin Project by sharing your knowledge with me.”
- Offer a blanket in addition to tobacco for any full day of outdoor work (e.g., site visits).
- Ensure that Elders are paid according to community standards set by Chief and Council. Use community day rates and half-day rates.
- Ensure that food and water is available to any and all Knowledge Keepers for the duration of the exchange.
- Ensure that extra food is available for the Knowledge Keeper to take home and/or share with family members that may visit during the knowledge exchange. The key: think communally rather than individually.
- If using the band office kitchen, purchase coffee and lactose-free milk in bulk, ensuring that you are entering into a reciprocal relationship with band office employees who are sharing their kitchen.

3 Working on the Upper Winnipeg River

Regardless of whether UofG researchers are accompanied by Knowledge Keepers from NAN on the Upper Winnipeg River or not, they must engage in culturally appropriate research activities and behaviour while learning from Manomin and the Winnipeg River. The Anishinabeg consider Manomin a gift from the Creator and a spirited being. UofG researchers must therefore take great care when learning from Manomin and the water.

3.1 Preparation

Prior to a field visit on the Winnipeg River, UofG researchers should familiarize themselves with Manomin and its significance to the Anishinabeg, as well as understand how manomin restoration ties into improving food security for NAN. There are several blog posts on the Manomin Research Project's NiCHE website³ as well as academic work⁴ that can provide this background.

Aside from reviewing written work, most important is that UofG researchers operating from a Eurocentric framework keep an open mind when considering Manomin as a spirited or other-than-human being. While Euro-originated settlers may be taught to classify plants (like Manomin) as distinct from human beings, the Anishinabeg maintain that we are all connected.

3.2 Materials

This is a list of materials that UofG researchers may need to bring with them when working on the Upper Winnipeg River, to ensure they are entering into a respectful relationship with the environment. Some items are specific to interactions on the Winnipeg River with Knowledge Keepers from NAN.

- Tobacco
- Blanket
- Food and Water
- Daily honorarium

3.3 Protocol

The following practices should be followed when spending time on the Upper Winnipeg River in the ancestral manomin sites, whether in the company of Knowledge Keepers or not.

³ Some blog posts that will provide the UofG researcher with a background on Manomin and food insecurity include "[An Introduction to Manomin](#), [Manomin Ecology: Environmental Factors that Impact Manomin Growth](#)" and "[The Interconnected Nature of Food Security and Food Sovereignty](#)."

⁴ An example of academic work to review is Amanda Raster and Christina Gish Hill, "The Dispute over Wild Rice: An Investigation of Treaty Agreements and Ojibwe Food Sovereignty," *Agriculture and Human Values* 34, no. 2 (2017): 267–81. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-016-9703-6>.

Tobacco Offerings

Tobacco offerings are made not only out of respect and appreciation for knowledge received from NAN, but also for what we learn from the environment. As such, UofG researchers will give tobacco offerings while on the Winnipeg River.

Giving tobacco to Manomin and to the Winnipeg River involves taking a small amount of pouch tobacco (similar to the amount given to the Knowledge Keepers) and dispersing it in the water. While the UofG researcher offers the tobacco, they should say a few words to share their intention and to express gratitude for safe engagement with Manomin and the waters. Tobacco will be offered before travelling on the river, and again at each ancestral manomin site. Details for the significance of each offering and suggested wording of acknowledgements are provided:

- **Before Travel:** UofG researchers must offer tobacco before leaving for work on the Winnipeg River (i.e., before the boat leaves the dock). This offering is made to help ensure the safety of the individuals on the boat and the acknowledgements should reflect this. Sample wording: “Please accept this tobacco as an offering to ensure our safe passage on the river today.”
- **Ancestral Manomin Sites:** Upon entry into an ancestral manomin site, UofG researchers should offer tobacco to Manomin. This offering should reflect the UofG researcher’s appreciation and respect for Manomin and the knowledge they are gaining from this exchange. Sample wording: “This tobacco is an offering to thank Manomin for all that we will learn from being here today.”

At times, an Anishinaabe representative from the Manomin Project may offer tobacco on behalf of the team.

3.3.1 On the River with Knowledge Keepers

As with any work with Knowledge Keepers from NAN, interacting with Knowledge Keepers on the Winnipeg River must uphold the cultural values of NAN. The previous section goes through this and is applicable when Knowledge Keepers visit ancestral sites with the UofG researchers. This is an incredible opportunity for knowledge sharing, and thus the same practices as previously described should be followed. Of particular note, make sure all Knowledge Keepers on the boat are given a blanket in addition to their tobacco offering, as well as plenty of food and water. This shows respect and appreciation for their time and wisdom as well as care for their comfort and wellbeing.

3.3.2 Sampling

Some manomin samples will be taken to conduct lab analyses and determine biomass estimates. As Manomin is a spirited being, UofG researchers have collaborated with NAN to determine how to take manomin samples in a respectful way. As mentioned, tobacco offerings will be given to Manomin upon entry into the ancestral manomin site. Additionally, UofG researchers will only take manomin samples once the plant has fully matured and is ready for harvesting (unless research dictates otherwise).

To further minimize the environmental destruction of manomin, an approach outlined by Kjerland (2015)⁵ will be followed for estimating biomass. Rather than taking manomin samples from all quadrats each year, unique site-specific equations will be developed that estimate biomass based on observational data, such as manomin height and stalk density. Development of these equations will require removal of some Manomin, however, rather than taking all Manomin in each quadrat, only 1 plant will be sampled for measuring biomass in order to develop the equations. This will minimize the UofG researcher's negative impacts on Manomin, ensuring UofG researchers take no more than what is required for the wellbeing of the study. It also reflects a desire to enter into a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship with Manomin.

3.3.3 Photography

Photographs are an important source of information while working on the Winnipeg River. In addition to our photo diaries, where repeat photography is used on a bi-weekly basis through the manomin season, photos will be taken on every field visit to document the experience.

NAN Knowledge Keepers have not expressed any concern with photographing Manomin and the ancestral sites, and in fact some community members have been involved in doing the photo diaries. There are, however, some specific locations on the Upper Winnipeg River that cannot be photographed. This includes any sites with pictographs as well as Anishinaabe burial grounds. It is also inappropriate to photograph individuals conducting a prayer or a ceremony.

When unsure of whether it is appropriate to take a photo of a site or happening, it is best to ask a Knowledge Keeper directly. While travelling between sites, UofG researchers may encounter these locations or ceremonies and should be aware not to take photographs but rather appreciate the gift of being among these culturally important locations.

⁵ Tonya Kjerland, "Wild Rice Monitoring Handbook," *The University of Minnesota Sea Grant Program - Publication #SH16* (2015): 134.

4 Conclusion

As described in this culturally sensitive field protocol, the Anishinabeg have a very intimate relationship with Manomin and the Winnipeg River. The Anishinabeg know Manomin as a spirited being deserving of care. This means that UofG researchers need to embody these cultural values while engaging in research with Manomin, the Winnipeg River, and with NAN. It is also important to recognize that, as the project progresses, additions and modifications may be made to this protocol. We learn from Manomin, the Winnipeg River, and Treaty People and must respect and value our relationships with each. Always keep an open mind and approach conversations and interactions as a listener and a learner. As long as we are genuine in our efforts to be respectful, ethical and culturally sensitive, and to always learn and grow, our research relationship will continue to flourish.