

The Manomin Project's Fall 2022 Equinox Newsletter



After months of steady growth, many Manomin plants will bear the fruits of their labour in the fall. Just like our plant relatives, the Manomin Project has experienced great growth over the summer. Please find a record of our exciting updates below.

Thank you, *miigwetch*, for your ongoing interest and support!

Updates on the Manomin Project

Reflecting on a successful field season

During the summer, team members from the University of Guelph traveled to Treaty #3. PhD candidate Samantha Mehlretter and Undergraduate Research Assistants Jane Mariotti, Tony Huynh and Laura Legzdins, with the guidance and support of Elder Guy Henry, collected knowledge about water depth and quality, river sediment, surrounding vegetation and Manomin quality. The team is now analyzing data collected on earlier visits with the River.

The Manomin Project also had help in the sky – our drone, affectionately named Marv Jr., took aerial images of the River which will enhance our team's understanding of manomin growth, particularly in relation to other plants like cattail. These images, coupled with pictures taken by Elder Guy Henry as part of our photo diaries, provide a visual record of River knowledge.



Researchers Tony (left) and Jane (right) canoe to a survey point.

Increasing location-based understanding

To understand how growing areas on the Upper Winnipeg River have changed over time, we are analyzing historic and contemporary satellite images. Our team is aiming to identify open water, Manomin stands and floating vegetation mats, commonly referred to as bog by band members, on collected images. This mapping creates opportunities to estimate Manomin yields and understand relationships between the bog, Manomin and the River.



From left to right: Team members Tony Huynh, Jane Mariotti, Elder Guy Henry, Laura Legzdins and Samantha Mehlretter grateful after a beautiful day on the River.

Brainstorming pathways for restoration

We are also looking to the future and investigating potential strategies for Manomin *reseeding*, which is the act of (re)introducing seeds into the River. When done in tandem with other aspects of restoration, such as restoring ecosystem function, reseeding has the potential to revitalize past populations. Reseeding involves making decisions about restoration priorities like determining where to source seed, how to plant seed and more. Reseeding strategies developed by the Manomin Project will be shared with the larger community for conversation. Selected strategies will be incorporated into a culturally-appropriate seeding protocol for implementation and care by Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation.

Presenting on the global stage

The Manomin Project was shared with a broader audience from July 10th to 13th as Sam Mehlretter presented at IFT FIRST, the Institute of Food Technologists' *Food Improved by Research Science and Technology* conference. She skillfully delivered oral and poster presentations about the Manomin Project and proposed 7 principles for addressing food insecurity through ecosystem restoration. The IFT named Sam a finalist in the Sustainability Grad Student Oral Competition. We are grateful that Sam continues to inspire important conversations about Human-Plant Relations and our environmental responsibilities.

Weaving knowledge to understand freshwater

Prompted by Elder requests to analyze how restoration work has been done with and for other Indigenous communities, we are reviewing case studies where Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Western Science have been woven together to better understand freshwater socio-ecological systems. The findings will be presented in a scoping review (a type of academic paper) as well as a report.

Improving knowledge access by transcription

Over the summer, the transcription team has been producing digital transcriptions of audio interviews and historical documents to improve community access to archival materials about the Winnipeg River. Some common topics discussed in historic records include water, weather, and food sources.

"Being involved in the Manomin Project has been an exceptional experience. Communicating with team members on a regular basis has provided space for problem-solving and sharing of transcription techniques, while being a part of this team has expanded my research interests exponentially. I am excited to continue the learning process in such a positive environment!"

- Graduate Research Assistant Autumn Perry



From left to right: Team members Jane, Sam, Tony, Laura and Britt study newly created identification guides for Treaty #3 cattail species.

Changing seasons and duties

Fall brings transformations in colour, temperature, and responsibilities for creatures preparing for winter. Just as the natural world is changing, some things in the Manomin Project are too.

Emma Scott has been our long-time Communications Coordinator. She has been responsible for newsletters like this one which maintain consistent communication with partners. Emma's commitment to knowledge sharing will leave a lasting impression on the Manomin Project as they pursue a Master of Library and Information Science degree at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. Emma will remain an active member of the Manomin Project, but will be transitioning from communications to data management. We thank Emma for their many gifts and wish them the best of luck as they turn over a new leaf!

The author of this newsletter is Undergraduate Research Assistant Laura Legzdins. She is honoured to assist in maintaining relationships with individuals and organizations invested in the Manomin Project.



Meet the Team: Tony Huu Thien Huynh



Meet Tony Huynh! Tony is a third-year Environmental Engineering student at the University of Guelph. He joined the Manomin Project as an Undergraduate Research Assistant during Summer 2022. Tony's interests lie in outdoor and hands-on education and working with youth. He draws from experience working at a historical museum, an outdoor nature centre, and a microbiology lab. Tony supports the Manomin Project by gathering and analyzing data collected during fieldwork as well as identifying off-river sites that may be suitable for Manomin restoration.

In May and August 2022, Tony participated in two fieldwork expeditions to the Winnipeg River with PhD candidate Samantha Mehlretter, Masters student Carissa, and Undergraduate Research Assistants Jane and Laura. With Tony's positive attitude, this season of fieldwork was a blast!

"The Manomin Project has truly taught me the importance of working in such an interdisciplinary project that puts community engagement in its core values. With so many ideas coming from all lenses of life, we can gain such a (...) thorough perspective on (...) important topics (...)"

- Undergraduate Research Assistant Tony Huynh

What's Next

Revising the Manomin Anthology

We are excited to share an update on the Manomin Anthology, a collection of essays, letters, and recipes by Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks that deepen our understanding of Manomin specifically and Anishinaabe ecological understandings (e.g., "All Our Relations") more generally.

The Anthology is currently in the revision process and has received feedback from Reviewer 1. While we await Reviewer 2's report, we are feeling empowered by reviewer comments such as: "There is a great need to bring Indigenous thought into the academic sciences and this book shows how this can be done."

This project is in development with UBC Press, tentatively titled *Manomin: Sustaining Anishinaabe-Aki*.

Reviewing progress and next steps

Team members Sam and Andrea are excited to return to Treaty #3 territory this month, where they will be completing additional fieldwork, retrieving the water level loggers installed in May and meeting with community leaders to share and discuss knowledge that was revealed by Manomin and the River during the 2022 growing season.

Food For Thought

"From fur and scale to feather and branch, intertwined powers work together each day constantly renewing this life that you belong to. As you exist, so do they; there is no separation."

- Poet Kristi Leora Gransworth, citizen of Kitigan Zibi Anishinaabeg

How do plant relations care for you?
How can you care for them?