

Ashi-Nisiwag Giizisoog (13 Moons)

Manoominike Giizis

Manoominike Giizis is the rice moon. The rice moon is also known as Basikwa' o Giizis (flying moon) and Odatagaagomini Giizis (blackberry moon). Manoominike Giizis begins its cycle as a new moon on August 20

The world was created when muskrat brought mud from the bottom of the flood to be placed on turtle's back. The turtle's shell has thirteen central plates, called scutes. The traditional Ojibwe calendar year follows a 13 moon lunar cycle. The names of each moon are influenced by natural phenomena, animal activity, and cultural practices and beliefs. Because the area in which Ojibwe is spoken is so vast, not all Ojibwe people use the same names for the moons.

Manoomin

Tom Howes

FDL Resource Management

Wild rice has been important to indigenous people in the Great Lakes region for thousands of years. Archaeological studies of pottery indicate consumption of wild rice in Minnesota for at least 2000 years. In Mishomis, Edward Benton Banai tells of the Anishinaabeg migration: "Many years ago, seven major nee-gawn-nakayg' (prophets) came to the Anishinaabe. These prophets left the people with seven prophecies, called Fires, each referring to a future era. These teachings are called the Neesh-wa-swi' ish-ko-day-kawn' (Seven Fires) of the Ojibway. The first prophet said: "In the time of the First Fire, the Anishinabe nation will rise up and follow the Sacred Shell of the Midewiwin Lodge... You will know that the chosen ground has been reached when you come to a land where food grows on water." This prophecy was fulfilled at Lake Superior, where they found manoomin. Rice has sustained our people since their arrival in the region; its importance cannot be overstated.

A more recent example of the cultural importance of wild rice can be found in A Forever Story: The People and Community of Fond du Lac Reservation. Robert Peacock tells the story of how our Reservation boundaries were redrawn: "After a survey of the exterior boundary of the Reservation had been made in conformance with the 1854 treaty description, it was found that the southern boundary, as surveyed by Bradshaw, was three or four miles north of the principal Band settlement at Perch Lake. Complaints by the Fond du Lac Band to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of Interior were submitted to the President of the United States so that lands around Perch Lake could be withdrawn from sale and appropriate steps could be taken by the President to settle the existing problems with the boundary by changing the lines of the established treaty boundary."

Manoomin generates more interest than all available natural resources. In the early 1900s, judicial ditching was a statewide practice intended to create more agricultural land. On Fond du Lac, these efforts proved disastrous for our rice lakes. Changes to Stoney Brook changed the lakes' response to rain events, altering the lakes' plant community. FDL community members responded with sandbag dams, pull dams, and trapping to ensure the wild rice would be given a chance to endure.

As our Reservation has grown and changed, so has rice management. The FDL Natural Resources Program was formed in the 1980s to evaluate the ditch network and impacts on rice. A management plan emerged that called for water control structures to regulate water levels and the use of mechanical removal of competing vegetation. Details of the plan are available under the natural resources tab at www.fdlrez.com. For the past three years, FDL Resource Management Division has collaborated with the U.S. Geological Survey and the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service to study the hydrology of the Stoney Brook Watershed using scenario models. This study was initiated to improve understanding of local hydrology and to evaluate strategies to improve rice lake management. The long-term management goal is to return our wild rice lakes to pre-ditch conditions, honoring the gift of manoomin to our people by not only ensuring it is here this year, but for many years to come.

What's in a Name?

Dave Wilsey,

UMN Extension

Dan Jones, Ojibwe language instructor, shared some of his thoughts about the different names of moons. He stressed the importance of recognizing that there is no "right" name, as that would imply that other interpretations are incorrect. The key is that moon names represent interpretations - sometimes they reflect history, or historical periods. Dan offered the example that one interpretation of the moon that corresponds with February is the "short (month) moon," a reflection of the modern calendar system...the lunar cycle is about 29.5 days - no one cycle is shorter than another! Another example is the moon that begins its cycle in the month of December, Little Spirit, likely a name that emerged from Christianity. Names reflect the different events and occurrences that have been important to communities, whether related to the changing seasons, important natural events, important foods and other resources, etc. With understanding language, as with so many other things, perhaps the greatest value lies in discovering why some questions have more than one answer.

Events:

20 August: 13 Moons Workshop: Manoomin. Info - 218.878.8001

Thirteen Moons is produced monthly by the Fond du Lac Resource Management Division and University of Minnesota Extension. Content is based on the appropriate moon, and addresses culture, ecology, and the management of natural resources. Comments and contributions should be directed to the FDL Resource Management @ 218.878.8001