

Declaration for Protecting Anishinaabe Manoomin

Introduction

Anishinaabe Manoomin (*Zizania palustris*, Northern Wild Rice) is an indigenous plant found only in the Great Lakes and Boreal Forest regions of Turtle Island (North America). Manoomin (“mi-no-min”) is an ecologically important species to the lakes and marshlands in this region. Manoomin beds provide habitat for countless species, as a nursery for fish, a staging ground for waterfowl, and a food source for many aquatic species, such as mammals, birds and insects.

Anishinaabeg have an oral history of Manoomin extending back more than 10,000 years in this territory and the archaeological record also shows a history of Manoomin in the Kawartha region dating back four thousand years. However, Manoomin has rapidly declined in the past century due to environmental changes caused by flooding since the construction of the Trent-Severn Waterway (TSW) and continued fluctuations to water levels. The decline of Manoomin is also due to pollution from development along shorelines, agricultural run-off, septic tank leakage, motorboat emissions, use of herbicides, foreign and invasive species, federally permitted dredging and the un-permitted removal of Manoomin. The resurgence of Manoomin indicates Nibi (Water) is returning to better health. The revitalization of Manoomin will support a sustainable ecosystem for Anishinaabeg, local residents and seasonal visitors.

Manoomin has nourished Anishinaabeg for millennia and newcomers for centuries. The Manoomin beds in this territory are heritage sites of remarkable importance. Many Anishinaabeg Elders, harvesters and other community members have worked for decades to revitalize relationships with Manoomin through restoration initiatives and community-based education. This work will ensure continued access to sustainable and nutritious local food sources in this territory for generations to come.

Manoominikewin (all the processes and knowledges associated with Manoomin) are inherent responsibilities and rights of Anishinaabeg within Treaty 20 (1818) and the Williams Treaties (1923) territory, and are also recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), of which Canada is a signatory. Furthermore, Manoomin beds in this territory are part of the larger Great Lakes ecosystem and are also an important Indigenous food source for Algonquin Anishinaabeg.

We acknowledge and declare that:

Anishinaabe Manoomin (Northern Wild Rice) is an ecologically vital freshwater plant species, a key element of Anishinaabeg traditions, health and economy, and a culturally sacred, sustainable food source. The health and protection of Anishinaabe Manoomin is critical to the Kawartha Lakes ecosystem and the broader Great Lakes watershed. The Indigenous Peoples of this territory, the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Anishinaabeg, have inherent responsibilities and rights to protect, restore and revitalize their relationships with Manoomin. These include their own ecological, cultural and economic food systems, which predate colonial settlement in all townships where Manoomin beds exist today or have existed (including in the County of Peterborough, City of Kawartha Lakes and Northumberland County).

- **We recognize the importance of our ecological relationships and our responsibilities to uphold treaty in partnership with the First Nations of this land.**
- **We call on governments, community bodies and residents to respect Anishinaabeg responsibilities and rights, and to support the restoration of Manoomin for the health of the water, earth and communities where it grows.**
- **We stand in solidarity and friendship with the Anishinaabeg Nation and the broader community of Manoomin caretakers and harvesters to protect and restore healthy relationships with Anishinaabe Manoomin in perpetuity.**

For more information about Manoomin or this Declaration, please contact:

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