TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE
NIBI MANOOMIN
SYMPOSIUM
Nibi & Manoomin Symposium: Building Lasting Relationships

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
University of Minnesota

September 25-27, 2013

North American Water Office
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cover photo Mille Lacs apron 1900
Dorothy Sam

As an Oğichidaakwe (ceremonial headwoman) I will tell you that Manoomin (wild rice) and Nibi (water) are the source of life for the Anishinaabe. Every time there is a ceremony, the water is mentioned in the phrases we speak. Women are the water carriers. We talk to the spirit of the rice, the food that grows on the water.

The drum is our heart; we are the same as the drum. We are like the skin on the drum. Animals eat the plant medicines for us and we eat the animals to heal ourselves and be healthy. Ask permission to use the animals.

All medicines have a heart. We are like the trees. We have roots (ancestors), branches (arms), and seeds (future generations of relatives).

Everything we have is shared. We need to help each other because of where the water, rice, and berries are today and the risks troubling them. Each morning put your tobacco out. Tobacco must be put out first before gathering rice, before touching the water, before touching the rocks.

Having a meeting now is good because everything is changing; the seasons are changing all the relatives are changing.

Words are prayers. There are no swear words in the Anishinaabe language.
Shirley Nordrum

Tread lightly, you may be stepping on the dreams of our children.
Sharon Day

Women carry the water. Men tend the sacred fire. We are the water. Copper purifies the water that is why we put water in a copper vessel for the water ceremony.

We are going to walk the Ohio River next year. It is one of the most polluted rivers in the country. Come along with me to heal the water.

Kathy Bird

My ceremonial name is Cloud, like water coming down in a mist. I was taught 12 different medicines. Strawberry is heart medicine. You have to use all five senses to learn the plant medicines. We practice sustainable harvest. We never pick a single site of all plant medicine. We only take some from each site and then move on, leaving the rest for future generations. Never take roots unless you are using them as a medicine.
Herb Sam

I am a Traditional Healer for the Mille Lacs Band. Your life no longer belongs to you when you are a healer, a medicine man. I need a calling card that says C.O.M., Common Ordinary Man.

I am given dreams that tell me how to do things; I also talk to the plants. They tell me what to do. Make sure you only use the plants that come to you. Don’t use others that haven’t spoken to you in some way. You need to feast the plants and treat them with extreme honor. You need to put a dish out to feed the spirits of the plants you use for food and medicine. There are no side effects with plant medicine.

Those that want to be healed must change their lives. People need to give something of them selves and do fasting. To be healed the problem needs to be identified whether it’s not knowing who their families are, or their clan, or their own language. To be healed a person needs to accept who they are starting now.

You don’t change the genes of the plants. The Creator made them the way they are, it is not our place to change what creation gave us.
Obisaan (Lee Staples)

I will tell you the most important thing and that is respect, respect, respect. What goes around comes around and I don’t necessarily mean financial returns. There is spirit in everything that exists.

You need to put out your tobacco offerings for water, for the fish, and for the rice. You even need to put tobacco in the water in thanksgiving for being able to swim in the water. Take care of the foods that are gifts from the Creator the fish, the deer, the wild rice the berries. Sharing is important, share what you have with others.

When you hear the Thunderbirds coming in a rainstorm, be respectful of them, put tobacco out for them and don’t talk about them.

We need to have compassion for elders and for those who are different. Don’t brag about yourself, and no backtalking.

Don’t take the white man’s religion. If you take the whiteman’s religion you don’t go to the same place as your other tribal relatives go that have not be Christianized. Those who commit suicide do not go to the same place as their relatives either, but must grub in the dirt and eat roots along the road and never get to their destination.