



Indigenous Food Systems Resilience: The numbers and narrative behind our work in 2023 and 2024

The Indigenous Food Systems Resilience Project is a partnership between UW–Madison, Tribal Nations, and a broad network of partners that supports food sovereignty for Tribes in Wisconsin through co-created research, education, and outreach. Together, we are working to transform food systems and improve community access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods.

Our Team

3 Graduate Students supported

9 Tribal partners and organizations representing all **11** federally recognized Tribes in Wisconsin

10 Full or part-time UW–Madison staff or students positions funded

14 UW–Madison units, divisions or departments including UW–Madison Extension and CALS

39 Total project team members

Our Work

Indigenous crops and livestock

Tribal partners: Ho–Chunk Nation Department of Agriculture, Menominee Tribal Department of Agriculture and Food Systems, and Ohe–láku Corn Growers Cooperative (Oneida)

Together, we are developing ways to scale and improve Indigenous corn production to meet demand, building Tribal capacity, and investigating collaboratively defined regenerative agricultural research questions.

- Supported Ho–Chunk Nation Department of Agriculture in harvesting 1,400 lbs of processed corn. Partnered to facilitate corn drying, cleaning, and mycotoxin testing at the UW–Madison Arlington Agricultural Research Station.
- Co-organized a Ho–Chunk community harvest event, a combine harvester demonstration, and community planting days at the Ho–Chunk Sauk Training Field and Whirling Thunder Ranch Training Farm.
- Helped plant over 150 lbs of cover crop seeds at Ho–Chunk’s Whirling Thunder Ranch Training Farm and Sauk Training Farm.
- Supported the installation of drip irrigation at the Ho–Chunk Sauk Training Farm.
- Partnering with the Ohe–láku Corn Growers Cooperative in Oneida to research interseeding Tuscarora white corn with culturally important and medicinal plants.
- Collaborated on trainings for Tribal producers, including tractor safety and foundational practices that support Indigenous agronomy.



Corn braiding workshop at Sauk Training Field. Photo by Frankie Anderson.

Manoomin (wild rice) restoration and research

Tribal partners: Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, 1854 Treaty Authority, and Menominee Tribal Department of Agriculture and Food Systems

We are leveraging existing partnerships with Tribal Nations and organizations to support manoomin restoration, research, and outreach across Wisconsin.

- Partnered with the Manoomin Restoration Partnership to better understand Tribal partners' and community members' concerns regarding whether restored manoomin in the St. Louis River is safe to eat.
- Sampled water, sediment, and manoomin in St. Louis River Estuary to test for environmental pollutants.
- Partnered with the UW-Superior Indigenous Cultures Resource Center to host a manoomin camp for UW-Superior students to learn about manoomin harvesting.
- Researching correlations between wild rice abundance and the quality and quantity of groundwater inflows in Oneida County lakes.

What Our Partners Are Saying

“We were able to get connected with UW–Madison and the RPI program.... They reached out to us and have been walking with us through this from day one. They assisted with planting, they assisted with harvesting, they assisted with actually providing seeds and starter plants. There has been a lot of help coming out of the University and the Extension office. I am absolutely astounded at how much help and resources are available out there to Tribes and to Ho-Chunk Nation.”



—Hinu Smith,
Executive Director,
Ho-Chunk Nation
Department of
Agriculture

Hinu Smith (left). Photo courtesy of Hinu Smith.

Maple sugaring and production

Tribal partner: Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

We are working to build capacity of Tribal maple syrup and sugar producers through shared learning opportunities, including webinars, trainings, and events. We are expanding the Extension-coordinated Tribal Maple Sugaring Network to facilitate knowledge sharing and storytelling among Tribal producers.

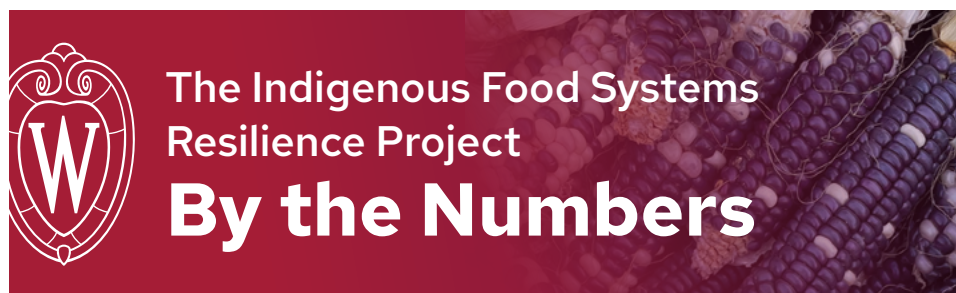
- Hosted a virtual maple syrup season debrief for Tribal producers to discuss their experiences tapping maples during 2024's unusually warm winter.
- Hosted webinars and trainings for Tribal maple syrup producers, including maple tubing system and tap-to-bottle operation workshops hosted by the Menominee Nation and Bodwéwadmī Ktēgan Forest County Potawatomi Farm.

Nutrition and community food systems

Tribal partners: Great Lakes Intertribal Council, Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Agriculture

We are working to improve Federal nutrition program alignment with Tribal food sovereignty efforts and develop more robust career pathways in Indigenous food sovereignty.

- Developed a policy brief on the Wisconsin In Lieu of Services Medicaid Benefit that went into effect in January 2025 and the opportunities it provides for Tribal Nations.
- Facilitated a meeting with the Great Lakes Intertribal Food Coalition and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Medicaid Program to increase our common understanding of intertribal food system efforts to address food sovereignty, nutrition and food security and explore if the Tribal Elder Food Box Program could align with Medicare's Food is Medicine-related benefits.
- Assisted the Great Lakes Intertribal Food Coalition and the Wisconsin Intertribal Child Care Association in submitting a grant application to further farm to early care efforts to increase access to traditional foods.



25+

volunteers including
UW–Madison students,
staff, and alumni

35+

community and
stakeholder events



5

collaborative hosted
skill-building workshops

Co-organized the
Indigenous Research
Forum at UW–Madison:

15

Tribal speakers featured

150

Attendees reached

Funding provided to the Wisconsin
Tribal Conservation Advisory Council
and the Menominee Tribal Department
of Agriculture and Food Systems:

\$142,000



+

Catalyzed development
of a new Standard
Research Agreement
between UW–Madison
and Tribes in Wisconsin
that respects Tribal
sovereignty and data
governance.

Photos: Dan Cornelius (top), Hanna McIntosh (center and below).

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Division of Extension
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences
Rural Partnerships Institute



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