



Indigenous Food Systems Resilience Project: A Look at Our Impact in 2025

The Indigenous Food Systems Resilience Project is a partnership between UW–Madison, Tribal Nations, and a broad network of partners who support food sovereignty for Tribes in Wisconsin through co-created research, education, and outreach.

Our Team

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

8 UW–Madison staff positions, and **2** student positions supported

14 UW–Madison units, divisions or departments engaged

41 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, Great Lakes Intertribal Food Coalition, Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, and Ohe-láku Corn Growers Cooperative (Oneida)

We are developing effective partnerships across organizations to strengthen Tribal agricultural capacity. With our partners, we are co-organizing shared learning and training opportunities and working side-by-side in the field to build Tribal and UW staff capacity, provide technical assistance, and share resources.

Shared learning and training opportunities

- ▶ Collaborated on a total of six in-person trainings with over 120 participants learning about agronomy, cover crops and soil health, produce safety, and tractor and agricultural equipment safety for Tribal producers and staff.
 - After attending a tractor safety training, 95% of participants feel more confident recognizing and correcting common farm hazards.

“All the staff and resource people were so helpful, knowledgeable, and just super approachable. Thank you!”

–Participant, Tractor Safety Training

- ▶ Co-hosted a Foundational Indigenous Agronomy Field Training and two-day Intertribal Harvest Gathering with the Ho–Chunk Nation Department of Agriculture reaching over 200 participants with traditional hands-on learning and UW-led sessions on cover crops, soil health, agricultural equipment safety, field cultivation, and hand tools.
 - Hosted Introduction to Indigenous Agronomy webinar series and Tiny Teachers: Learning from Insects webinar series reaching 175 participants.
 - 100% of participants surveyed who attended an Introduction to Indigenous Agronomy webinar learned something new and know whom to reach out to with questions.

Building capacity through partnerships

- ▶ Supported Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Agriculture in planting, managing weeds, and harvesting 21 acres of Indigenous corn and one half acre of cover crops demonstration plots.
- ▶ Planted one half acre of cover crops for demonstration at Menominee Tribal Department of Agriculture and Food Systems farm, supported planting and harvesting one acre of Indigenous corn, provided strawberry plants for intercropping research and community gardens, and supported equipment purchasing.



Ryan McGeshick of Sakaogon Chippewa Community and Ryan McClure of Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Agriculture engage with UW-Madison graduate student Paul Lema and Extension Program Manager Rue Genger about weed management at the 2025 Intertribal Harvest Gathering. Photo by Dan Cornelius.

What Our Partners Are Saying

“In partnership with the Wisconsin Rural Partnerships Institute’s Indigenous Food Systems Resilience project, we have significantly expanded training opportunities for staff and producers from Wisconsin Tribes. Food sovereignty is a priority for each Tribe, and together with the UW project team, we are building an educated community of Tribal producers while connecting people, culture, and UW experts.”

—Jeff Mears (Oneida),
Executive Director of the Wisconsin
Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

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.

- ▶ Supported three Tribal rice camps reaching over 200 people and facilitating shared learning between elders, Tribal community members, and local community groups about harvesting and processing wild rice.
- ▶ Collected a second year of sediment and manoomin samples at 10 sites in the St. Louis River Estuary to test for heavy metals and PFAS in partnership with the Manoomin Restoration Partnership, Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, 1854 Treaty Authority, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
- ▶ Supported one graduate student supervised by Emily Stanley and Gretchen Gerrish in the UW-Madison Center for Limnology who is investigating the potential impacts of groundwater exchange on wild rice in lakes in Oneida County.



Harvesting wild rice at the Intertribal Manoomin Camp in Manitowish Waters in September, 2025. Photo by Dan Cornelius.



Bad River Food Sovereignty Director Katie Koch (center) and community members set up Bad River's first maple sap tubing system with instruction from DJ Micik (Menominee Department of Agriculture and Food Systems) and UW Extension. Photo by Dan Cornelius.

Maple sugaring and production

Tribal partners: Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, Menominee Tribal Department of Agriculture and Food Systems, and Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission

We are expanding the Extension-coordinated Wisconsin Tribal Maple Sugaring Network to facilitate knowledge sharing and storytelling among Tribal producers and build the capacity of Tribal maple syrup and sugar producers through critical training opportunities.

- ▶ Hosted a When Do I Tap My Maple Trees? webinar and midseason Maple Syrup Season Check-in webinar reaching 49 live attendees.
- ▶ Co-hosted three maple sap tubing workshops totaling over 50 participants in partnership with the Menominee Tribal Department of Agriculture and Food Systems, Forest County Potawatomi Bodwéwadmí Ktëgan Farm, and Bad River Food Sovereignty Department.
- ▶ Hosted two two-day chainsaw safety trainings (SAWW Level 1 & 2) with the Menominee Tribal Department of Agriculture and Food Systems.
- ▶ Supported Bad River Food Sovereignty Department in setting up a new maple sap tubing system and supported intertribal collaboration around maple tubing infrastructure.



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 develop more robust career pathways in Indigenous food sovereignty in Wisconsin and to improve nutrition program alignment with Tribal food sovereignty efforts.

- ▶ Hosted a three-day Milwaukee Indigenous Urban Agriculture Tour for 28 Tribal youth and staff showcasing Tribally owned farms, programs, and organizations. Of the post-event survey respondents, 95% noted they made new or strengthened existing partnerships as a result of attending.
- ▶ Expanded efforts to explore robust food sovereignty career pathways, including in nutrition and dietetics. The team connected with Tribal college, university, and high school programs to build opportunities and awareness, and fill gaps in access.
- ▶ Continued efforts to explore the Wisconsin Food Is Medicine Medicaid benefit and how to remove barriers for Tribal community member access.

“ Thank you so much! This was fabulous and an incredibly eye-opening and inspiring experience for our youth! Miigwetch! ”

–Participant, Indigenous Urban Agriculture Tour

“ It's inspiring to see others work in the food justice realm, and nice to learn other methods of growing. 10/10 recommend. ”

–Participant, Indigenous Urban Agriculture Tour

Left: The Milwaukee Indigenous Urban Agriculture Tour included a stop at the Native Wellness Garden where participants helped with garden work and sampled the day's harvest. Photo by Hanna McIntosh.



The Indigenous Food Systems Resilience Project

By the Numbers

2

new partnerships with Red Cliff Mino Bimaadiziwin Farm and Bad River Food Sovereignty Department



10

webinars reaching over

250

attendees



7

in-person trainings and community events organized or co-organized by the project reaching

650+

participants

12

videos produced, including a 30-minute documentary spotlighting the growth of the Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Agriculture



4

published media articles



15+

Tribal partner events attended

67%

of surveyed participants from

18

events plan to make a change based on what they learned



Photos clockwise from left: Dan Cornelius, Hanna McIntosh, and UWEX NRI/Leah Kavallaris

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law. You may request an interpreter, materials in an alternative language or format, or other services to make this report more accessible, by contacting Hanna McIntosh at hanna.mcintosh@wisc.edu. There is no added cost to you for these services.



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



The Indigenous Food Systems Resilience Project is funded by the Wisconsin Rural Partnerships Institute. The institute is funded by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture and was created to build new partnerships to better meet the needs of rural communities, and to advance the land-grant mission of the university, support community-based projects.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and should not be construed to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy.