Wild Rice

I. Curricular Areas

Social Studies/History
Science
Language Arts

II. Learner Goals

Students will identify wild rice as an important historic food source for Ojibwe people, how wild rice was harvested and processed, and the important cultural significance wild rice has for the Ojibwe people.

III. Learner Outcomes

1. Students will be able to identify wild rice and where it grows.
2. Students will correctly state fall as the time wild rice is harvested and the process used to harvest wild rice.
3. Students will list and describe the four steps in processing wild rice, drying, parching, threshing, and winnowing.
4. Students will make a comparison of "paddy rice" and wild rice and discuss the importance of wild rice to Ojibwe people today.

IV. Teacher Background

Wild rice is the edible grain of a tall aquatic grass. It is one of the most important foods to the Ojibwe and other American Indian tribes. The Ojibwe name wild rice is mahnomen (mah- no - men). Wild rice grows in shallow mud bottom lakes, ponds, and streams, primarily in the Great Lakes region of the United States and Canada. Wild rice is harvested in the late summer early fall. Our traditional stories tell of how wild rice played a large part in the migration of the Ojibwe people from the Great Salt (Atlantic Ocean) to areas we call home today.

Traditionally, the harvesting of wild rice was an important event of the year. When the elders in charge of the harvest decided the time was right, each family set up camp near the ricing fields. Individual families did not own these fields, but rather, they had the right to use certain sections. Since wild rice does not ripen all at the same time, it was important to rice carefully not to damage the unripened rice in the harvest process , so the area could be harvested again the same year. Ojibwe ricers always made sure that some of the grain fell back into the water to reseed for the following year.

The harvest process began with tobacco being offered along with a prayer of thanksgiving. The outcome of this harvest meant the difference between having enough food for the winter or people going hungry.

The process itself has many steps:

1. Harvesting the rice by "knocking" the seeds into the canoe
2. Drying the seeds by spreading them on a sheet of birchbark to expose them to the sun and wind.
3. Parching the seeds by placing them in a large iron kettle and stirring them over a low fire to remove more moisture.
4. Threshing the seeds to help remove their husks by digging a hole, covering it with deer hide and softly walking on them with new moccasins. (Jigging)
5. Winnowing the rice to remove the chaff from the seeds by placing portions of the threshed seeds in a winnowing basket and tossing them carefully in the air to have the wind remove the chaff.

(A more detailed description with pictures is attached.)

After the harvest, the families who riced together would have a harvest celebration. Prayers of thanks were offered for the gift of rice.

Today, wild rice continues to be an important part of Ojibwe culture and families rice in a traditional way however they often use aluminum boats and gasoline powered engines to help with the threshing process.

V. Student Activity

Students will re-enact a Wild Rice Harvest with each student taking a part of the harvesting and processing procedure. Color sheets and information sheets will be given to each student.

Save Wild Rice

Keep It Wild!

Protect Wild Rice from Genetic Engineering

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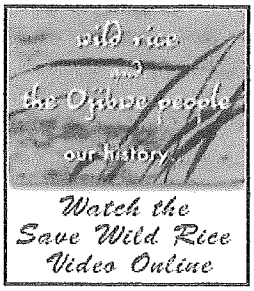

Genetic Engineering and Patenting

What is Genetic Engineering?

Genetic Engineering is transferring DNA from an unrelated species into the DNA of another species. It is now possible to genetically engineering plants and animals with DNA from Bacteria, Viruses, Plants, Animals and Humans.
For more information visit **www.centerforfoodsafety.org**

Genetic Work on Wild Rice:

At present, the University of Minnesota is mapping the genome of wild rice. This research aids in breeding studies, and lays the intellectual and informational foundations for genetic engineering. Wild rice has not yet been genetically engineered; we hope to ensure that GE wild rice never enters the ecosystem of Minnesota. While traditional breeding has produced numerous hybrid/domesticated varieties of "wild" rice, which are used by the cultivated wild rice industry, genetic engineering takes human intervention in plant genetics to a new level. The methods by which plant and animal genetics are altered in genetic engineering are wholly unnatural. Such genetic combinations would be impossible without human intervention. From the Anishinaabeg standpoint, the genetically engineering of a sacred plant which provides food, medicine, and spiritual healing is unethical. Also, the potential for cross-contamination between natural lake and stream wild rice and GE wild rice could prove detrimental to natural stands, compromising the ecological diversity of Minnesota's lakes and streams.

What is Patenting?

Patents are granted to indiviuals or corporations for a "novel invention" which now also includes plants and other living organisms. Patents give sole ownership and control of a gene, a plant and its offspring to the owner of the patent.

Patents on Wild Rice

NorCal holds two patents on breeding processes for wild rice, and Australian researchers have applied for a patent on crossing white rice with wild rice. The prospect of a corporation or individual having exclusive rights to wild rice, or processes associated with the plant, is antithetical to a worldview which sees natural resources as belonging to all people. While much of the earth's biological diversity resides in developing nations, the lion's share of patents on those resources belong to industrialized countries. Further patenting of life will likely lead to further economic exploitation and by wealthy nations of poorer ones. Preventing genetic engineering and patenting of wild rice will be a strong step in the protection of indigenous peoples, their cultures, and the natural resources that they have been stewards of for millennia.

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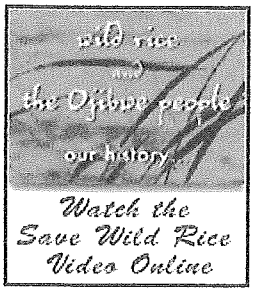

Keep it wild! Protect Wild Rice From Genetic Engineering
Gego Aanjitooken Manoomin
Don't Change The Wild Rice

Don't Change The Wild Rice

Manoomin, or wild rice, is a sacred food to the Anishinaabeg, and a key part of the ecosystem of the Northern Minnesota Lakes region. Over the past decades, plant breeders have developed wild rice for paddies in Minnesota, and today most of the wild rice on the market comes from rice paddies, and indeed sixty-seven percent of it from California Each fall, millions of pounds of California wild rice comes into the state to be processed, some of that rice, if genetically engineered would irreversibly contaminate our manoomin. Minnesota is the center of the biodiversity of all wild rice. There are over 60,000 acres of natural wild rice growing throughout the lakes and rivers. Today, new work on wild rice threatens the genetic integrity of this plant. We need your help to stop any potential genetic contamination of wild rice. Go to our **Action Page** to see how you can help protect manoomin for the next seven generations.

Wild Rice Legislation heard in House Ag Committee!

in **Legislation**, **News**