



**GLIFWC**

[www.glifwc.org](http://www.glifwc.org)

# The Nature of the Treaty Right: *Preserving a Lifeway*

For centuries the Ojibwe people of the Lake Superior region relied on the abundant resources available from the land, lakes and rivers, harvesting according to the flow of the seasons all that was necessary to sustain them. The harvests yielded fish, game, wild rice, maple sugar, berries, and numerous plants—all regarded as gifts from Aki (Earth) that fed both the bodies and spirits of the people. With thanksgiving, asemaa (tobacco) was often put down, acknowledging the gift and the spirit of the plant or animal to be taken.

In the mid-1800s when Ojibwe leaders were pressured to sell, or cede, their traditional homelands, they did so only with the promise that the people could continue to harvest the resources on ceded lands, thus preserving their way of life and the continued ability to fulfill spiritual, ceremonial, medicinal, subsistence and economic needs. In the Ojibwe

language this is known as inaadiziwin—the Anishinaabe lifeway.

It is not surprising that treaties signed with the U.S. government in 1836, 1837, 1842, and 1854 specifically kept harvest rights. “The privilege of hunting, fishing, and gathering the wild rice, upon the lands, the rivers and the lakes included in the territory ceded, is guaranteed to the Indians...” (Article V, 1837 Treaty with the Chippewa). This language secured a usufructuary right, or a right to use in legal terms, but primarily it secured the continuance of an Anishinaabe lifeway for generations to come.

However, as Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin

became states and regulated natural resource harvest, the treaty rights were ignored. Tribal members were arrested and fined for exercising their treaty rights until recent court decisions affirmed the continued validity of those rights in the ceded territories.

Today, treaty rights are regulated through the tribally-adopted codes and enforced by tribal and Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission’s (GLIFWC) conservation officers and tribal courts.

GLIFWC’s eleven member tribes continue to share a common origin, history, language, and culture as well as treaties. They share a traditional and continuing reliance upon the natural resources. The preservation of treaty rights is also a preservation of the Ojibwe culture that is manifested by a unique relationship to Aki and the circle of the seasons.



*Water ceremony*

# Public Information and Outreach

Fostering strong community relationships and an informed tribal and non-Indian public, GLIFWC has become a clearinghouse for accurate information on Ojibwe treaty rights and related resource management. Misunderstanding of tribes, tribal sovereignty and treaty rights prompted scenes of racially motivated protest and violence at Wisconsin spearfishing landings when the tribes first began to exercise their treaty rights in the mid 1980s. Rifts in communities, tensions in schools, and unseemly demonstrations gave northern Wisconsin a social black eye. Many who participated were simply uninformed or misinformed, prompting GLIFWC to launch a public education effort that continues today.

Using print and online mediums to provide accurate, timely information about treaty rights, harvest data, and GLIFWC's multi-faceted work in resource management, GLIFWC keeps tribal harvesters and the general public up-to-date on current tribal natural resource management issues and activities.



## **Educate Educators:**

GLIFWC's materials are used extensively in public schools, colleges and universities, and GLIFWC focuses on outreach to educators through an annual mail-out and by targeting education conferences in the tri-state area. This is done in the belief that an educated public will help build stronger, more positive relationships between tribes and their neighbors and yield healthier communities.

## **Accessible Information:**

GLIFWC publishes a tri-annual newspaper, Mazina'igan, free of charge to all subscribers in the US and Canada, containing current news related to treaty rights. GLIFWC information and publications, including biological reports, are online and downloadable from our website at [www.glifwc.org](http://www.glifwc.org). Current events can also be accessed on GLIFWC's Facebook page; also see back pocket for a resource list.



# Youth Outreach

**Outdoor Skills:** Encouraging youth to learn and enjoy outdoor skills, GLIFWC sponsors events for youth featuring traditional Ojibwe hunting, fishing and gathering activities like gathering and processing wild rice. GLIFWC conservation officers work closely with the USFS at Michigan's Camp Nesbitt focusing on treaty rights and natural resource career exploration while incorporating Ojibwe cultures. Trapping workshops as well as ice fishing/decoy-making workshops and kids' fishing days on reservations are also part of the year-long effort to teach youth outdoor skills while incorporating traditional ecological knowledge, respect for the resources, and the Ojibwe language.

**Ojibwe Language/Ojibwemowin:** GLIFWC has successfully developed several tools to assist with the incorporation of language into GLIFWC's work and its teaching programs. Several interactive language CDs which feature Ojibwe names of the different species as well as place names within the ceded territory help youth become acquainted with and use the Ojibwe language. GLIFWC also produces informational materials targeting youth K-12 on treaty rights, environmental responsibility, Ojibwe stories and perspectives, and language.



# The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC)

GLIFWC serves its eleven member Ojibwe tribes by assisting with the implementation and protection of their court-affirmed, treaty hunting, fishing and gathering rights in the ceded territories. The ceded territories include lands ceded in the 1837 and 1842 Treaties in Wisconsin, in the 1836 and 1842 Treaties in Michigan, and the 1837 Treaty in Minnesota. GLIFWC's service area is about 60,000 square miles including about 45,000 square miles in northern Wisconsin, east-central Minnesota and Michigan's Upper Peninsula and 15,000 square miles in Lake Superior.

Formed in 1984 following the 1983 *Voigt* Decision, GLIFWC is guided by its Board of Commissioners along with two standing committees, the Voigt Intertribal Task Force and the Great Lakes Fisheries Committee, which advise the Board on policy. The Board of Commissioners is composed of the tribal chairperson from each member tribe or the chairperson's designee.

To assist with the implementation and protection of its member tribes' treaty rights, GLIFWC provides services in the areas of biology/resource management; enforcement; policy/legal; public information/outreach; and resource development/marketing. GLIFWC employs about 65 full-time staff, hiring seasonal employees during peak harvesting or field seasons. GLIFWC is one of four similar intertribal commissions nationwide.

## GLIFWC's Programs

Maintaining well-regulated harvest seasons and healthy natural resources is of critical importance to GLIFWC's member tribes who continue to rely on those resources for food as well as for cultural, medicinal and spiritual sustenance. GLIFWC strives to meet those needs as well as to protect and enhance the natural resources and their habitats, benefitting both the tribes and the general public.

## Biological Services

GLIFWC's biological staff regularly assess key resources, such as walleye, lake trout, and wild rice and work with their counterparts from state, federal and local agencies to manage ceded territory resources. GLIFWC's goal is to provide culturally appropriate harvest opportunity for tribal members while preserving the natural resources.

## Wildlife

The Wildlife Section focuses on the implementation and monitoring of treaty hunting, trapping and wild plant gathering in the treaty-ceded territories. Data gathered from assessments and harvest reports serve as a basis for setting season quotas. For some species, harvest data are collected and shared with state and federal counterparts. Harvest is managed through permits and on-reservation registration stations.



*Harvested deer*

In addition, GLIFWC's wildlife biologists work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to implement the treaty waterfowl season, and they also manage a CITES tag program for the treaty harvest of furbearers.

In addition to studies on deer (*waawaashkeshiwag*), wild rice (*manoomin*) and American marten (*waabizheshiwag*), GLIFWC has undertaken a long-term study of the impact of logging on understory plants used by the Ojibwe. This unique study documents understory plants prior to and following timber harvest in study plots.



*Manoominike/ricing*



*Invasive purple loosestrife*

## **Manoomin (Wild Rice):**

GLIFWC is in the forefront of efforts to preserve and enhance manoomin, a culturally critical resource for its member tribes. GLIFWC wildlife biologists monitor the harvest of wild rice by both state and tribal harvesters each year. Also, staff complete wild rice surveys to inform tribal ricers about the relative abundance of this important plant to help ricers prepare for the harvest season. In 2010, GLIFWC completed a landmark inventory of manoomin beds in Wisconsin, resulting in a catalog of rice-producing waters representing the most in-depth account of wild rice in the state. GLIFWC also carries out a reseeded program each year in cooperation with tribal, state and federal partners to enhance existing beds or to re-establish manoomin beds that have vanished.



*Reseeding wild rice*



*American marten*

## **Waabezhesi (American Marten):**

GLIFWC has studied forest carnivores including American martens, fishers (*ojigag*) and bobcats (*gidigaa-bizhiwag*), with a current focus on the American marten—an important Ojibwe clan animal. GLIFWC participated in an award-winning cooperative effort to ensure the viability of marten populations on the Chequamegon National Forest through research and reintroductions. Working with researchers from the US Forest Service (USFS) and Purdue University,

GLIFWC staff collared and tracked reintroduced martens, studying their preferred habitat, home range, energy use, and survival rate.

## **Invasive Species:**

The identification and control of invasive species is a priority for GLIFWC, especially those species that jeopardize resources critical to the Ojibwe. For instance, GLIFWC has maintained a long-term purple loosestrife control program, using both chemical and biological control methods to reduce loosestrife infestations in wetlands. GLIFWC also works cooperatively with local weed management



*Purple loosestrife eradication*



*Electrofishing surveys*



*Recording survey data*

groups and performs annual assessments on designated lakes testing for the presence of invasive species such as Eurasian watermilfoil, spiny waterflea, and curly-leaf pondweed. Data from terrestrial and aquatic assessment are mapped using GIS, shared with other agencies and recorded on GLIFWC's invasive species website at [www.glifwc.org/invasives](http://www.glifwc.org/invasives).

## Inland Fisheries

The Inland Fisheries Section is concerned with 1836, 1837 and 1842 ceded territory waters and the fish and aquatic animals living there. The primary focus is management of the walleye fishery which is harvested largely during the spring treaty spearfishing and netting seasons.

Working cooperatively with state, federal and tribal biologists, Inland Fisheries staff perform annual spring and fall surveys of walleye populations in ceded



*Spine sampling*

territory lakes, resulting in a comprehensive, long term database on the shared walleye fishery. Inland Fisheries staff have also worked together with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources biologists to inventory walleye and northern pike in Mille Lacs Lake.

In addition to the annual assessments, Inland Fisheries staff meet regularly with their counterparts from the involved states to exchange and discuss data and determine biologically based harvest limits for quota-regulated species on shared, mixed-fishery lakes. Inland Fisheries staff also monitor and manage the spring spearing and netting seasons, when the tribal harvest requires daily tabulation so daily quota adjustments can be made.

### **Long Term Exploitation Study:**

The Inland Fisheries Section is working with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to evaluate the effect of a 50% exploitation rate on walleye in Sherman Lake (Vilas County), one of GLIFWC's long term study lakes. (Exploitation rate refers to the percent of an adult



*Spearing walleye*

population that can be harvested annually.) This lake is part of a larger study to evaluate the 35% exploitation rate agreed to by the tribes and the State for walleye in Wisconsin. However, a feature unique to the Sherman Lake project is that the number of walleye available for harvest each year is shared equally between tribal spearers and state-licensed anglers.





*Siscowet assessments*



*Juvenile whitefish assessments*

# Great Lakes Fisheries

The Great Lakes Fisheries Section provides science-based conservation and management expertise to the tribal commercial fishery in the 1842 Treaty ceded waters of Lake Superior. Sound management ensures that the fishery resources are conserved, protected, and managed in a way that affords sustainable economic opportunities and enhances the quality of life for the Anishinaabe people of the Lake Superior region.

The Great Lakes Fisheries Section also acts as a liaison between GLIFWC member tribes and other tribal, state and federal agencies. Through this liaison role, partnerships are formed which expand opportunities for tribal members to exercise treaty rights during well-regulated, off-reservation seasons.



*Sea lamprey*



*Lake sturgeon assessments*

The Section provides equitable, tribal participation in intergovernmental partnerships which guide fisheries management regimes throughout the Great Lakes Basin by representation on committees of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC), Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, Lake Superior Binational Program's Aquatic Community Committee, and Wisconsin State/Tribal Technical Committee.

The Great Lakes Fisheries Section monitors the treaty commercial harvest in Lake Superior which is regulated through quotas, management zones and gear restrictions. Staff perform annual assessments on lake trout, whitefish and siscowet trout. In addition, Section staff work with tribal and federal fisheries biologists on lake sturgeon assessments.

## **Lamprey Control:**

The Great Lakes Section fulfills a long-term commitment to assist the GLFC and the USFWS Sea Lamprey Control Program. GLIFWC staff set lamprey traps annually each spring

on select rivers, performing mark-and-recapture population assessment to help determine estimated abundance of sea lamprey in these Lake Superior tributaries and in Lake Superior as a whole.

**Name' (Lake Sturgeon):** Checking on the status of the prehistoric lake sturgeon, the Great Lakes Section annually performs lake sturgeon assessments in Lake Superior near the mouth of the Bad River in cooperation with the USFWS and the Bad River Tribe. The GLFC's Lake Superior Technical Committee conducts similar lake sturgeon assessments lakewide.



*Cold water rescue training*



*Trapping instruction*





*GLIFWC information booth*



*Joint patrol*

# Intergovernmental Affairs

The Division of Intergovernmental Affairs assists GLIFWC member tribes in securing the recognition, implementation and protection of treaty-reserved rights. It works with other governments to ensure that tribal treaty rights are recognized and affirmed. This can occur through litigation, but more often happens through the establishment of intergovernmental agreements such as the tribes' Memorandum of Understanding regarding gathering on lands owned by the USFS. These agreements also specify how the tribes will implement their ceded territory rights, and the Division assists in drafting model codes and ordinances for consideration by the tribes.

The Division also assists in treaty rights implementation by helping coordinate the intertribal co-management that is a necessary component of the tribes' self-regulatory system. Finally, the Division engages other governments when management or permitting decisions may affect resources that are the subject of the tribes' rights. For example, staff participate in inter-jurisdictional management partnerships such as the Binational Program to Restore and Protect Lake Superior through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

## Resource Development

### *Creating Jobs & Building Healthy Tribal Communities:*

The Lake Superior tribal commercial fishery is one of the oldest ongoing industries in the United States. The Lake Superior Ojibwe first marketed fish to French fur traders, then to early industrialist John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company, and today to hundreds of family-owned restaurants located throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. Realizing tribal fishermen must now compete in a global market, GLIFWC has assisted tribal entrepreneurs improve their fish processing and marketing capacity and develop new value-added product lines. Sound science and effective tribal regulation ensures this industry will remain sustainable for generations to come, and restaurants can continue to feature Lake Superior fish as a local delicacy.

GLIFWC also seeks to assist native businesses that rely on manoomin (wild rice). Helping these small, family-owned-and-operated businesses become more efficient improves their opportunities for growth and provides entrepreneurship training for tribal youth.



*Photo by biskakone*

**Healthy Lifestyles:** In addition to supporting the regional tourism economy, these native businesses also supply and market healthy foods to support a traditional Ojibwe diet. GLIFWC seeks to promote healthy food choices and lifestyles in order to assist its member tribes in combating chronic diabetes and heart disease, conditions that are rampant in tribal communities. By promoting

harvesting, processing and consumption of natural resources, tribal members not only benefit from healthy food but also from the outdoor activities involved in harvest and processing.

**Tribal Youth:** GLIFWC supports efforts by tribal governments to counter juvenile delinquency, mitigate gang influences, and improve self-confidence and academic performance by encouraging tribal youth to practice traditional harvesting skills and learn the responsibilities that come with the harvest of natural resources.



*GLIFWC resources*



*Hunter safety instruction*

# COOPERATIVE PROJECTS & RECOGNITIONS

## **US Forest Service Eastern Region Honor Award—2011.**

This award recognized GLIFWC, WDNR, and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest for the “Collaborative Management of the Pine Marten in Wisconsin,” a long-term research project.

**Department of Interior “Partners in Conservation” Award—2009.** For the Casting Light Upon the Waters partnership involving inland fisheries assessment.

**Wisconsin Gubernatorial Proclamation—2009.** Governor James Doyle honored GLIFWC by proclaiming July 2, 2009 Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission Anniversary Day and commending GLIFWC for its professional and cooperative off-reservation treaty rights management.

**Wisconsin Legislature Joint Resolution—2009.** The Wisconsin Legislature enacted 2009 Senate Joint Resolution 40 congratulating GLIFWC on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and acknowledging its role in protecting natural resources and building cooperative relationships in the treaty ceded territories.

**Wisconsin Act 27: GLIFWC Warden Bill—2007.** This law recognizes GLIFWC’s law enforcement authority and capabilities and extends many of the same statutory safeguards and protections to GLIFWC officers that are afforded to other law enforcement officers.

**US Fish & Wildlife Service Certificate of Appreciation—2007.** Recognizes GLIFWC’s role in the wolf recovery program.

**Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species “Invader Crusader” Award—2005.** In recognition of GLIFWC’s “commitment and dedication in the battle against invasive species,” GLIFWC was awarded the first annual Invader Crusader award.

**US Forest Service’s National “Taking Wing” Award—2002.** For GLIFWC’s involvement in the coastal wetlands program in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

**Harvard’s Honoring Nations Honor Award—2000.** Recognizing the treaty rights/National Forest Management Memorandum of Understanding.

**US Forest Service’s Honor Award/ Public Service—1999.** For GLIFWC’s involvement in the Wilson Flowage Dam Reconstruction.



# GLIFWC'S MEMBER TRIBES

## WISCONSIN BANDS:

Bad River  
Lac Courte Oreilles  
Lac du Flambeau  
Sokaogon Chippewa  
Community/Mole Lake  
Red Cliff  
St. Croix

## MICHIGAN BANDS:

Bay Mills Indian Community  
Keweenaw Bay Indian Community  
Lac Vieux Desert

## MINNESOTA BANDS:

Fond du Lac  
Mille Lacs



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