



Manidoo Ogitigaan

Annual Report



2019

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"The mission of Manidoo Ogitigaan is to work with our communities to preserve and revitalize the Spiritual knowledge, language, culture, and ceremonies of the Anishinaabeg to improve our health and the health of our ecological family."

2019 was a productive and exciting year for us! As a grassroots community led Native nonprofit, we thank each and every one of our community members, knowledge-keepers, language speakers, artists, youth, teachers, and volunteers who made our work possible. Thank you to our supporters, partners, and the contributors who also donated to make this work a reality. This was our first full year in operation, and we are honored and humbled to have had so many beautiful experiences in 2019, and to have shared it with such wonderful people. -Kaitlyn Grenier, Co-Director

2019 Highlights

Community Gatherings and Food as Medicine

As part of our 13 Moons Project, we incorporated seasonal traditional (medicinal) foods into our work. We supported the Obaashiing University Sugar Bush, a maple sugar and syrup harvest in Obaashiing that is open for community members to learn. We will be supporting it for a second year in 2020. We also demonstrated snaring and cleaning rabbits and making rabbit blankets at the Fond Du Lac Language Symposium with Nate Johnson and Rosemarie DeBungie. In addition, we demonstrated wild ricing with the youth at Red Lake Middle School and some Ponemah Community members, berry picking, and plan to expand our work with food as medicine in 2020. As Indigenous people, we suffer from diabetes, heart disease, malnutrition, and cancer at higher rates than the national average. Returning to our wild and Indigenous food can heal us mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Reconnecting with the land and ecosystem is integral to our health, healing, and identity as Anishinaabeg. Throughout harvesting season, we recognize and share how to respectfully harvest food and medicine using Asema, and we also appropriately and respectfully share the stories that were passed down to us about our sacred foods and medicines. We are proud to have built a relationship with Indigenous Chef Vince Johnson, who is also a Red Lake enrolled member and Obaashiing community member. Vince has partnered with us on several food focused community events, and has also provided us with beautiful videos and photography in addition to healthy Indigenous meals. In 2020, we will expand our community led “food as medicine” initiative to include mindfulness.



Anishinaabemowin

Within our language exists a unique world-view and way of understanding life. If our language perishes, thousands of years of knowledge will perish with it. In Red Lake, there are only a handful of first language speakers left, and not all of them are willing to share and teach. At White Earth, there are no first speakers left. Anishinaabemowin is the only language that should be used in our most sacred ceremonies, and the only way to express our Creation stories and legends. In 2019, we worked with eight first language speakers and Elders (whom we have built relationships with); three from Red Lake Nation, 2 from Lac LaCroix, one from Canada, and two from Nigigoonsiminikaaning. They agreed to work with us as language advisers and shared knowledge, videos, and recordings to further revitalize and share Anishinaabemowin. We worked with Elders to transcribe and record the language and stories, and have also been researching old language in the National Archives in DC in an effort to connect it to our oral history. In November of 2019, we started a community language table in Obaashiing on the Red Lake Reservation that works with first speakers and also follows a university format in grammar patterns. The language table meets most Saturdays at 1:00 in Obaashiing. In December, we provided language table "regulars" with the opportunity to attend the Fond Du Lac Language Symposium. 10 community members attended, and 3 were invited to be part of a panel. The language table will continue into 2020, and will include language immersion opportunities that are also available to Red Lake and Ponemah schools. We continue to share language through our Facebook group, social media, our website, and through a new series of Podcasts that began in 2019. We also work with the schools on the Red Lake Reservation to provide cultural and language services to students and teachers as appropriate. Language was incorporated into our 13 Moons seasonal community gatherings, as well. In addition to our language work, in April of 2019, we worked with Kade Ferris, Tribal and Cultural Preservation Officer at Red Lake, and Robert Shimek, Red Lake member and historian, on the location and possible repatriation of items in the Smithsonian Collections, which we help care for while they are in the Smithsonian's care. In 2019, we also began a Language Documentary with Lakeland Public TV that is currently being edited.



Community Building and Healing through Traditional Art

We kicked off 2019 with a community feast featuring healthy Indigenous food and a giveaway. In addition to seasonal events and harvesting, we held Artist workshops at the Watermark Art Center in Bemidji that featured birch bark artist and first speaker from Manitoulin Island, Howard Kimewon and Zac Earley. They demonstrated how to make birch bark fanning baskets, and a video was made by Vince Johnson. Artist Nancy Kingbird from Cass Lake also shared her beading techniques and led a workshop to show attendees how to use beading as a healing meditation. Nancy Kingbird is a homicide survivor, and she shared with us how beading has been her number one healing tool and meditation. She also allowed us to video record. Zac Earley hosted a birch bark basket making class with the youth at Red Lake Middle school, and showed them how to work with winter bark and etch into it. He also shared Ojibwe knowledge and stories of the birch trees. Our biggest community event was the Wiigwaasi-Jiimaan project, supported by Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux, the voters of Minnesota through a grant by the Region 2 Arts Council (legislative appropriation from the Arts and Heritage Fund), and Kalliopeia Foundation. Great Lakes Lifeways Institute from Gun Lake Michigan brought a team of birch bark canoe builders to share their canoe building skills with our community. The Wiigwaasi-Jiimaan Project was generously hosted by Obaashiing University in Ponemah. Victoria and Robert Fineday helped lead the project. Kevin Finney, Punkin Shananaquet, Dave Shananaquet, Michael Pigeon, Frank Sprague, Rachel Austin, and Laban Smith helped community members learn how to properly harvest and then build an old style Red Lake ricing canoe. Lana WhiteFeather, Corey WhiteFeather, Myron Kingbird, Rose Rosebear, Elliot Cloud, Brooke Cloud, Kelsey Annas, Sausage, regularly helped with the canoe build throughout the month long project. Miigwetch to Brian Dow for helping with the bear. Food, supplies and firewood were generously provided by Jay Rosebear, Lana Whitefeather, Myron Kingbird, Gretchen Spears, Patty Kingbird, Arnold Kingbird, Rose Cloud, Rachel Austin and crew, Vince Johnson, and Vickey Fineday. Speakers of Anishinaabemowin during the project were Rosemarie DeBungie, Arnold Kingbird, and Rose Cloud. Scott Knudson from Lakeland Public TV filmed the project. We held a Community Round dance with help from Wesley Cloud, James Cloud, and other local singers. So many people made this project possible, and we hope we didn't overlook anyone. This project was an amazing opportunity to connect language, food, land, and community. In 2020, our canoe apprentices will continue learning the skill of birch bark canoe building. The goal is for them to once again be able to teach what their ancestors knew. In December of 2019, we held a traditional snowshoe making workshop with artist Nate Johnson, Anishinaabe Elder and first Speaker Mary Moose, and her son Abraham Sutherland. Throughout the week long workshop, community members shared food, stories, and our language. Nate, Mary, Abraham, and Manidoo Ogitigaan staff took youth from Red Lake Middle school into the woods to learn how to identify and harvest black ash for snowshoes. The harvested black ash was taken to the Red Lake community of Ponemah, where community members learned how to create snowshoe frames from black ash, how to scrape deer hides, prepare them for lacing, and how to weave. Throughout our art workshops, we incorporated the Anishinaabe 13 Moons and brought in Elders, speakers, and Knowledge-Keepers. We provided Red Lake Middle School and Ponemah school the opportunity to learn some Anishinaabe Star Teachings from Mary Moose and Abraham Sutherland. Each school enjoyed a presentation on the Anishinaabe Star Teachings. Our Language Table also was able to host an Anishinaabe Star Teachings presentation given by Mary and Abraham. We continue to work with Anishinaabe artists to provide learning opportunities to community members of all ages who want to learn Ojibwe art traditions to reconnect with the land, heal themselves, keep ancestral knowledge alive, and build artisan skills that can help provide for families.



Community Building, Leadership Development, and Healing through Mindfulness

In 2019, we began our endeavor into Indigenous Mindfulness and Food as Medicine through the Center for Mind Body Medicine. We wanted to offer more tools to our people to address the health disparities and trauma that exists as a result of colonization. We know that Indigenous Mindfulness has significantly reduced suicide rates of youth on the Pine Ridge reservation, and that White Earth has had success with Indigenous Mindfulness Empowerment, so we looked for ways to bring it to our community. In 2019 we received support from the Minneapolis Foundation to begin exploring Indigenous Mindfulness Empowerment in a way that works for us, so we could begin introducing it to our community. In the spring of 2019, we were contracted by the Minneapolis Foundation to send 2 community members from Ponemah to Food as Medicine training through the Center of Mind Body Medicine. Victoria Fineday and youth representative Marlyn Black both represented the Indigenous perspective on a Speaker's Panel during the workshop. In the fall of 2019, We invited Linda EagleSpeaker (Blackfeet Elder) and Donna LaChapelle (White Earth Elder) to host a weekend workshop in Mindfulness techniques for the Red Lake Middle School teachers at the Rail River Folk School. Linda and Donna are both Elders in Residence with the Center for Mind Body Medicine. We also hosted a weekend workshop in the community of Ponemah (Obaashiing). This year we are excited to offer more training opportunities to community members who work in the Red Lake schools, Chemical Health, as well as community members who have been helping us with our seasonal events that are focused on health and well-being. We are excited about the work because it will be community led, community developed work that is directly connected to our original ways of life. In 2020, we will be expanding our Indigenous Mindfulness work in Red Lake. In 2019, our work focused on the rights, health, and well-being of our people. We worked directly with children, women, men, and Elders in our communities to give the people the platform to lead work that is designed to empower and heal us through our identity and traditional lifeways as Anishinaabeg. In 2019, we addressed the root causes of the issues we face by reclaiming and honoring our way of life, healing on our terms, and giving space for community members to lead by sharing their talents and knowledge. Time is running out to do this work, because the last knowledgeable Elders and speakers are leaving quicker than we can learn from them. We believe that within our ceremonies, traditional foods, medicines, language, stories, and art, exists the key to healing historical trauma and keeping ourselves and the earth healthy. In 2020, we will continue to encourage and support community leadership development while doing our part to build a strong, healthy community for the health and well-being of our people.





Board of Directors



Judy Fairbanks, Board Chair
(White Earth Ojibwe) Retired Adjunct Instructor at The White Earth Tribal and Community College, Board Chair at the White Earth Land Recovery Project, Co-Founder of Manidoo Ogitigaan (original board member)



Leslie Gibbs, Board Member
(Red Lake Ojibwe) Fond Du Lac Human Services, Child Protection Social Worker (Indian Child Welfare), Board Chair for the American Indian Community Housing Organization in Duluth, Co-Founder of Manidoo Ogitigaan (original board member)



Victoria Fineday, Board Secretary
(Red Lake Ojibwe) Obaashing University, women's rights advocate, Co-Founder of Manidoo Ogitigaan (original board member)



Robert Fineday, Board Member
(Red Lake Ojibwe) Storyteller, Owner and Artist of OJIBWE CRAFTS

Executive Directors

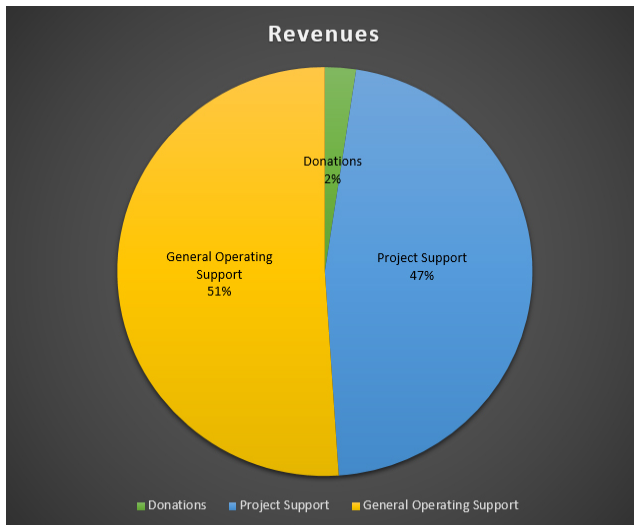


Zac Earley, Co-Director
(White Earth Ojibwe) Proficient Ojibwe language speaker and learner, Co-Founder of Waasaabiik Ojibwemotaadawin, Long time apprentice to Elder Anna C Gibbs, Co-Founder of Manidoo Ogitigaan

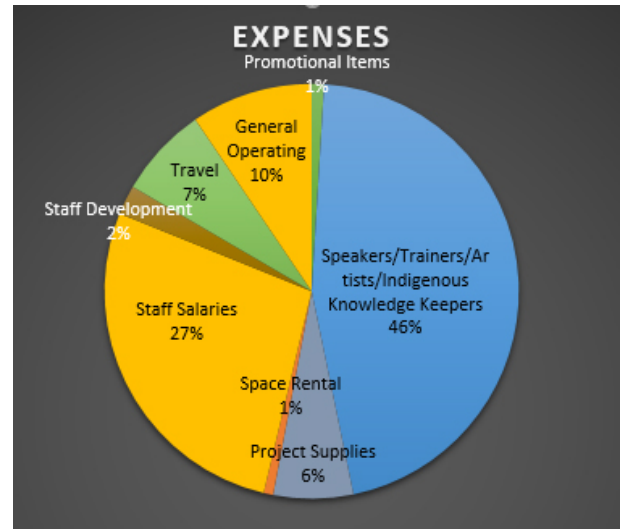


K.E. Grenier, Co-Director
(Multiracial) Community Development Consultant and writer for non-profit organizations at Red Lake and White Earth, Environmental Artist, learner of Ojibwe language, Co-Founder of Manidoo Ogitigaan

2019 Financials



Project and general operating support revenue is from individual donors and foundation grants or contracts.



Staff:

Zac Earley Co-Director
Kaitlyn Grenier Co-Director
Terrin Riehle CPA

Projects:

- 13 Moons Seasonal community and youth events
- Anishinaabemowin preservation and revitalization
- Wiigwaasi-Jiimaan (birch bark canoe build)
- Indigenous Mindfulness Empowerment and Food as Medicine Training (Mind Body Medicine)
- Arts Access Projects (basketry, canoe build, beading workshops)



Miigwetch (Thank you) to our Funders! A full list of funders can be found on our website. We also thank our individual donors and volunteers!