

Report of the Fond du Lac / University of MN Extension Natural Resource Utilization & Needs Assessment *Nimbizindawaanaanig*

“We Listen to Them”



February 2009



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

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A note on terminology

According to the MN Ojibwe dictionary, there are two forms of “*listen*.” One is *bizindan*, which refers to listening to an inanimate object (not a person). The other is *bizindaw*, which refers to listening to an animate object (a person or animal). The second option was appropriate for this work. Bill Howes helped in the conjugation of the verb *bizindaw* to produce *nimbizindawaanaanig*, or *we listen to them*.



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Introduction

The 20 conversations that made up the Fond du Lac (FDL) *Nimbizindawaanaanig* emerged from an earlier series of conversations about unmet needs. One was the need to create an introductory experience for a natural resources educator, one newly hired by the University of Minnesota Extension to work with Fond du Lac and the surrounding community. The new Extension position came about through talks between FDL's Resource Management Division (RMD) and the University, and was staffed in April 2008. What better way for a newcomer to learn about the community than to have the opportunity to speak with and learn directly from its members?

Another was the need (or desire) on the part of the FDL's RMD to receive informal community input on natural resources and resource management through a different format than the process used to create their Integrated Management Plan (IRMP). The development of the IRMP was thorough and included community feedback, but the *Nimbizindawaanaanig* process represented a means to receive additional, informal input about the Band's natural resources. It did so through a different method (open-ended conversations) and using a different audience, namely one that did not choose to step forward to participate in the IRMP process. This report should be viewed as a complementary piece to the IRMP.

The *Nimbizindawaanaanig* process gave each of nine team members a chance to learn about, or rediscover, the numerous ways that individuals, families, and the community view natural resources and natural resource utilization. On any given day, one of us might spend an hour speaking to one individual about these issues; seldom do any of us dedicate full and consecutive days to speaking with individuals in their own kitchens, yards, or favorite coffee shops. It was only through this extended commitment of time and effort that patterns and themes began to emerge.

This report highlights the most identifiable and consistent themes that emerged through our conversations with 20 FDL community members. The themes identified in the pages that follow are the team's best interpretation of the actual comments we heard among a subset of the community. This report does not state, "What *is*," in Fond du Lac; rather, "What *seems to be*." In addition, recommendations come from the suggestions of participants, but are also seasoned by our own ideas generated from their comments. We hope this report serves as a starting point for

conversations and projects related to natural resources and culture. It is not intended as an evaluation of the community. We hope to stimulate these conversations by sharing this report with the participants in this process as well as others in the community and beyond who may have interest in the connections between culture and natural resources.

The *Nimbizindawaanaanig* process made clear the fact that Fond du Lac, in its individuals, organizations, and programs, possesses numerous valuable resources. One big challenge is to develop greater awareness of *who* is already out there and *what* they are doing. Existing resources should serve as the starting point for expanded or new efforts whenever possible, or practical. We suggest that there is room for everyone at the table where plans are being made for new activities, projects, and programs aimed toward increasing people's interaction with natural resources.

Method

Sondeo is the Spanish term for *sounding out*. The Guatemalan Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology (ICTA, by its Spanish name) developed the *sondeo method* for rapid assessment of community-defined priorities, and to place identified priorities within a broader social, economic, and environmental context. The sondeo process developed in Guatemala was used for the Fond du Lac assessment, however, the Ojibwe term *Nimbizindawaanaanig*, meaning *we listen to them*, was adopted by the team to better communicate the objective of the process.

The assessment process is *participatory* to ensure the direct input of community members in the assessment of local priorities and needs assessment. It requires the participation of *interdisciplinary* team members, or those from different backgrounds, to facilitate a more balanced treatment of critical factors such as age and gender relations, formal and informal economies, and local environmental considerations. The assessment is *rapid*; limited resources such as time, money, and goodwill, both on the part of the assessment team and the community participants, are used as productively as possible.

The team was comprised of nine members: five from the Fond du Lac Resource Management Division (RMD) and four from the University of Minnesota Extension (Extension). Educational background and professional experience and emphasis varied among team members and included forestry, natural resources management, conservation biology, education, youth development, leadership, and business administration. Planning the assessment, including selection of and training in the method, were accomplished through several sessions over the period from June to September 2008. The assessment occurred over three days, from 30 September to 02 October 2008.

Participants were selected in advance. They were chosen to represent three perceived community groups: known users of natural resources (by peer referral), probable users of natural resources (those registered with RMD), and those with no certain connection to natural resources (holders of RMD identification cards, which are also used for identification). All participants were contacted by telephone to assess interest and arrange meeting times and location. The need to contact prospective participants by telephone presented a pair of challenges. First, current telephone numbers were unavailable for many of the names, which made contacting them

impossible. Second, many of those for whom we had telephone numbers were resistant or unwilling to participate, even when the involvement of FDL's RMD was made clear.

Each day, working teams of two to three members were formed from the larger assessment team. Throughout the day, working teams conversed with community participants, each team (ideally) meeting with three participants per day. Conversations centered on a theme previously determined by the team; specifically, how do Band members use and/or interact with natural resources on the Fond du Lac Reservation? The objective was to gain a better understanding of the factors that drive and/or inhibit use or interaction with natural resources, with a secondary objective of better understanding what might facilitate new or increased use or interaction with natural resources.

Conversations were not structured by a formal interview questionnaire. Moreover, no notes were taken during the conversations, providing an informal and hopefully less threatening atmosphere. Immediately after each conversation, team members found a convenient location to make notes – the car, a coffee shop, a restaurant. During this time they had opportunity to discuss important themes and to prompt recollections. At the end of the day the small teams regrouped to share and discuss important themes and observations from the day's conversations. On day two and three the working teams were shuffled and the process was repeated. In addition to providing an opportunity for shared learning among the entire team, the end-of-day sessions also served to formulate and refine an outline that would become this report. This document represents a common platform upon which future collaboration can be built.

Context

The Anishinabe / Ojibwe¹

Anishinabe is the Ojibwe language word that translates as “original people.” According to one source², in 2000 the collective Ojibwe Nation counted 130,000 enrolled Ojibwe in United States and 60,000 in Canada, not including the Canadian Métis, many of whom have Ojibwe blood. If these were added together, the Ojibwe would be the largest Native American group north of Mexico. The 2000 U.S. Census reports that, in Minnesota, 65 percent (32,184) of the self-identified “Indian” population described themselves as Ojibwe.

Ojibwe is part of the Algonquin linguistic family, which also includes the Ottawa, Potawatomi, Cree, Menominee, Sac, Fox, Miami, Delaware, Shawnee, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Blackfeet tribes. Prior to the arrival of the French, Algonquin territory extended from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains, from Hudson Bay to the Cumberland River in Kentucky. Control over some of this vast area passed gradually to other native populations, such as the Iroquois, and was ultimately seized by Europeans.

Ojibwe became Chippewa, the formal name used in treaties and by governments, as European newcomers corrupted the term. For treaty purposes, the Minnesota Ojibwe was divided into five Bands: Superior Band, Mississippi Band, Pillager Band, Red Lake Band, and Pembina Band. Fond du Lac is part of the Superior Band. The La Pointe Treaty of September 24, 1854 (10 Stat. 1109) was the last principal treaty between the Bands of Ojibwe inhabiting Northern Minnesota, Northern Wisconsin, and the Western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. In this treaty, the various Bands of Superior and Mississippi Chippewa ceded approximately 25% of the land areas of the present states of Minnesota and Wisconsin plus the balance of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to the United States.

¹ This section is excerpted / adapted from Graves and Ebbot (2006: p.26) and www.fdlrez.com

² www.tolatsga.org/ojib

Fond du Lac

The Reservation of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Figure 1) is located in northeastern Minnesota (Figure 2), adjacent to the city of Cloquet (pop. 11,4790³) and approximately 20 miles west of Duluth (pop. 84,167²). The Reservation contains three districts: Brookston, Cloquet, and Sawyer. Established by the La Pointe Treaty of 1854, the Reservation is one of six associated with members of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Section 16 of the Act of 18 June 1934 (48 Stat. 984; FDL IRMP: p.11).

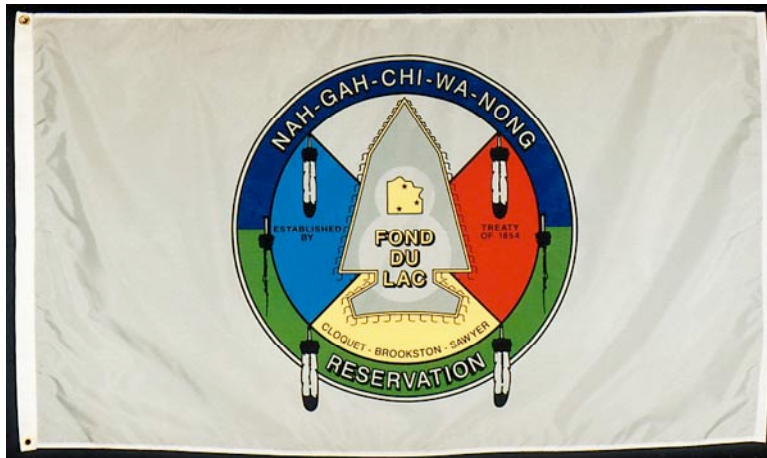


Figure 1. Fond du Lac seal on flag

The Fond du Lac perimeter encompasses 101,426 acres (FDL 2008), which in turn are subdivided by several forms of land tenure: county, state and private; trust land; and fee land (Table 1). This complex land tenure mosaic resulted, in large part, from the General Allotment (Dawes) Act of 1887 (25 U.S.C. 331), which was intended, “to break up reservations, destroy tribal relations, settle Indians upon their own homesteads, incorporate them into the national life, and deal with them...as individual citizens” (Graves and Ebbot 2006, p.16). Allotments were assigned to families, but title remained with the federal government, in trust, unable to be taxed, sold, or transferred without Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) approval. Over time, allotment has produced fragmented ownership, where parcels can have hundreds of owners. The Indian Lands Consolidation Act (1984, 1997, and 2000) allows the Federal government to purchase fragmented allotment lands on behalf of the affected Band. As a result, Fond du Lac now has greater than 50 percent interest in 38 percent of the allotments.

³ 2006 Census data, <http://minnesota.hometownlocator.com/census/estimates/cities.cfm>

Table 1. Land tenure on the Fond du Lac Reservation

Tenure status	Acres
County, State, Private	71,337
FDL Trust Land	25,087
<i>Alloted</i>	<i>16,991</i>
<i>Tribal/Band</i>	<i>8,096</i>
FDL Fee Land	5,002
Total	101,426

Source: FDL IRMP 2008: p. 12

Demographics

At the time of this study, Fond du Lac had approximately 3,800 enrolled members (FDL 2008, p.9). Additional demographics are highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2. Fond du Lac demographic information, 2000

Concept	Value	Unit
Unemployment	8.8	Percent
Poverty	11.4	Percent
Average income	38,190	US\$
Median home value	84,500	US\$

Source: U.S. Census 2000, reported in Graves and Ebbot 2006: p.315

Government

The Fond du Lac Reservation is one of six Chippewa Indian Reservations in the state of Minnesota organized as the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe under Section 16 of the Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard) of 28 June 1934, as amended. The Secretary of Interior approved the revised Constitution and By-Laws of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe on 3 March 1964.

The Reservation Business Committee (RBC) is the governing body of the Fond du Lac Reservation and is composed of a Chairperson, Secretary/Treasurer, and Three Representatives from each District: Cloquet, Sawyer, and Brookston. All are elected to four-year terms on a staggered basis with the Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer also serving as members of the Executive Committee of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. Written personnel policies provide for the daily operation and supervision of tribal programs and staff.

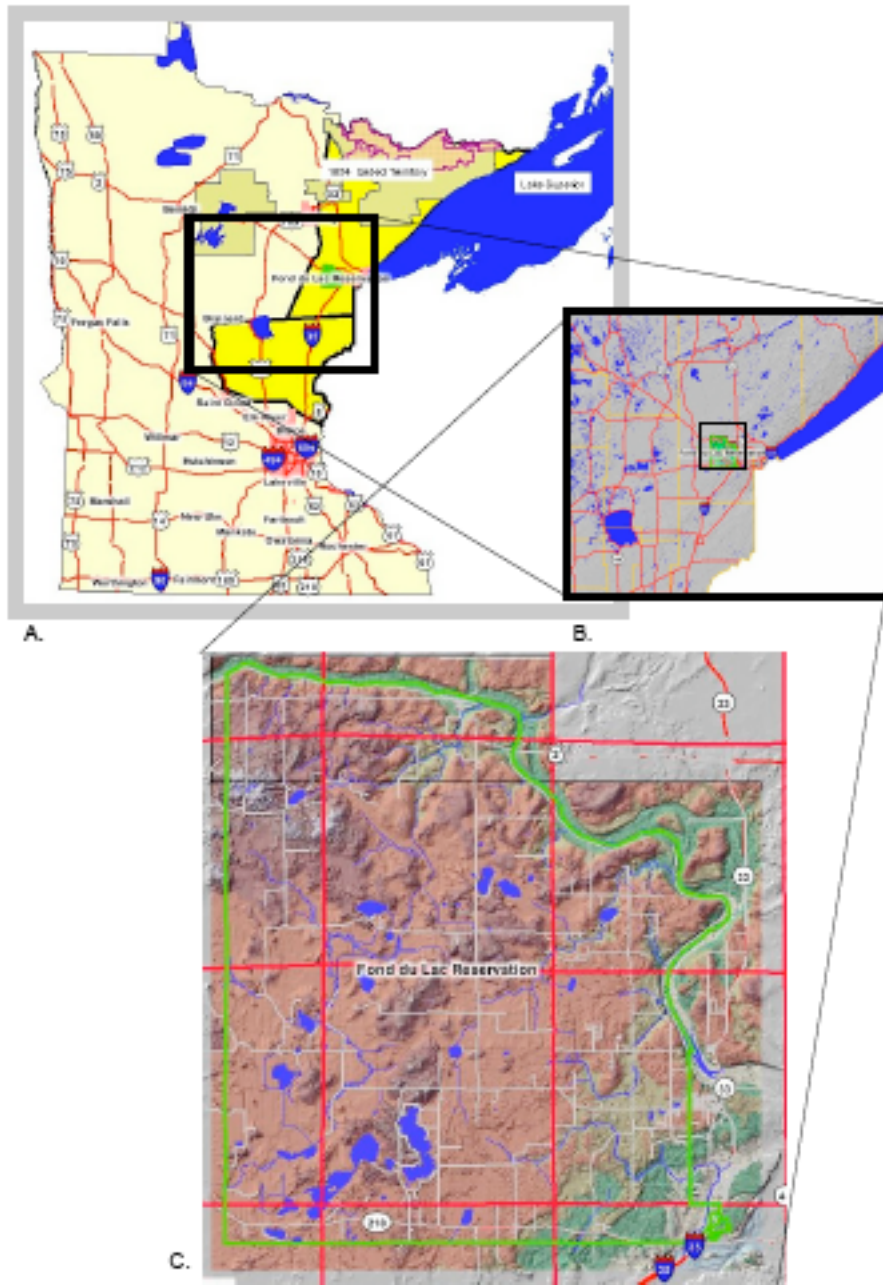


Figure 2. FDL Maps A) B) C) (source: *fdlrez.com*)

Economy

The Fond du Lac Reservation is a diversifying local economy. The Fond du Lac Black Bear Casino & Hotel and the Fond du Luth Casino have been very successful for the Band and additional businesses have been developed. In 2004, the Reservation opened the Fond du Lac Propane Company and the Fond du Lac Gas & Grocery. In 2007 the Reservation started a Band owned logging company named Fond du Lac Timber and Logging. Also, in 2001 the Band added a golf course at the location of the Black Bear Casino as an additional alternative to tourists in the area. The Reservation continues to operate a construction firm. Between Tribal enterprises and administration the Band employs over 2030 employees, half of whom are Native American, and a \$50 million payroll⁴.

Higher education

The Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College provides higher education opportunities for its communities and is one of 32 institutions that make up the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU). The college was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1987 and adopted by the Reservation in the same year. The Equity in Educational Land Grant Status Act of 1994 also designated the Tribal College as a Land Grant institution. This federal act conferred this status on 29 tribal colleges and also authorized the establishment of an endowment to support land grant initiatives related to teaching, research, and extension.

Environment and Natural Resources

Natural Resources

Glaciers covered most of Minnesota and Wisconsin during the most recent ice age. Retreating glacial drifts left outwash and till over much of the area and a distinct glacial topography. FDL landscapes range from rolling hills in the northwest to lowlands in the eastern and southern sections. Lakes, streams, rivers, and wetlands cover nearly half the Reservations acreage. Four types of wetlands – forested, small shrub, emergent (including wild rice lakes) and aquatic beds – offer diverse habitat for plants and animals (FDL 2006). Reservation land is situated within two watersheds: the majority of surface area drains into the Saint Louis River while a smaller, southern portion drains into the Moosehorn River, a tributary of the Kettle

⁴ Source: FDL Economic Development Division

River. The 47-mile Judicial Ditch system on the western side of the reservation was built in the early 1900s to make more land available for agriculture (FDL 2006). The area remained too wet for crop production, but the ditches resulted in the loss of 2000 to 4000 acres of wetland, with substantial impact on fish and wildlife populations and wild rice.

Using a ecological classification system developed for the state by the MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the majority of FDL land within Reservation boundaries falls under the *north shore highlands* subsection, which is classified within the *northern Superior uplands* – a region characterized by glacially scoured bedrock terrain with thin deposits of coarse, loamy till and numerous lakes (Figure 3). Soils range from poorly drained organic matter to well-drained soils with gravel and sandy loam subsoil.

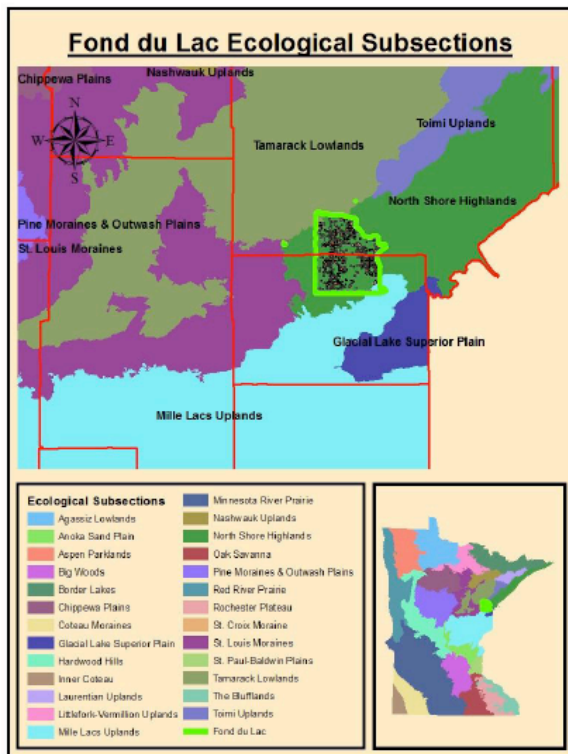


Figure 3. Regional Ecological Subsections as classified by the MN DNR (source: *FDL IRMP 2008, pg.35*).

FDL Resource Management, specifically Forestry, also utilizes *Native Plant Community*, or Early Settlement Vegetation, classifications in their decision matrix (Figure 4). Uplands were primarily aspen and birch forest cover, tending toward conifers or northern hardwoods.

Remaining forest cover was predominantly pine types. Today, aspen and birch comprise nearly

1/2 (up from 1/3) of the land base. Conifer bog and swampland is substantially less than in the past and upland conifers species are likely less represented and distributed. FDL’s Integrated Resource and Management Plan details and evaluates several management strategies that were developed in part using Native Plant Community classifications.

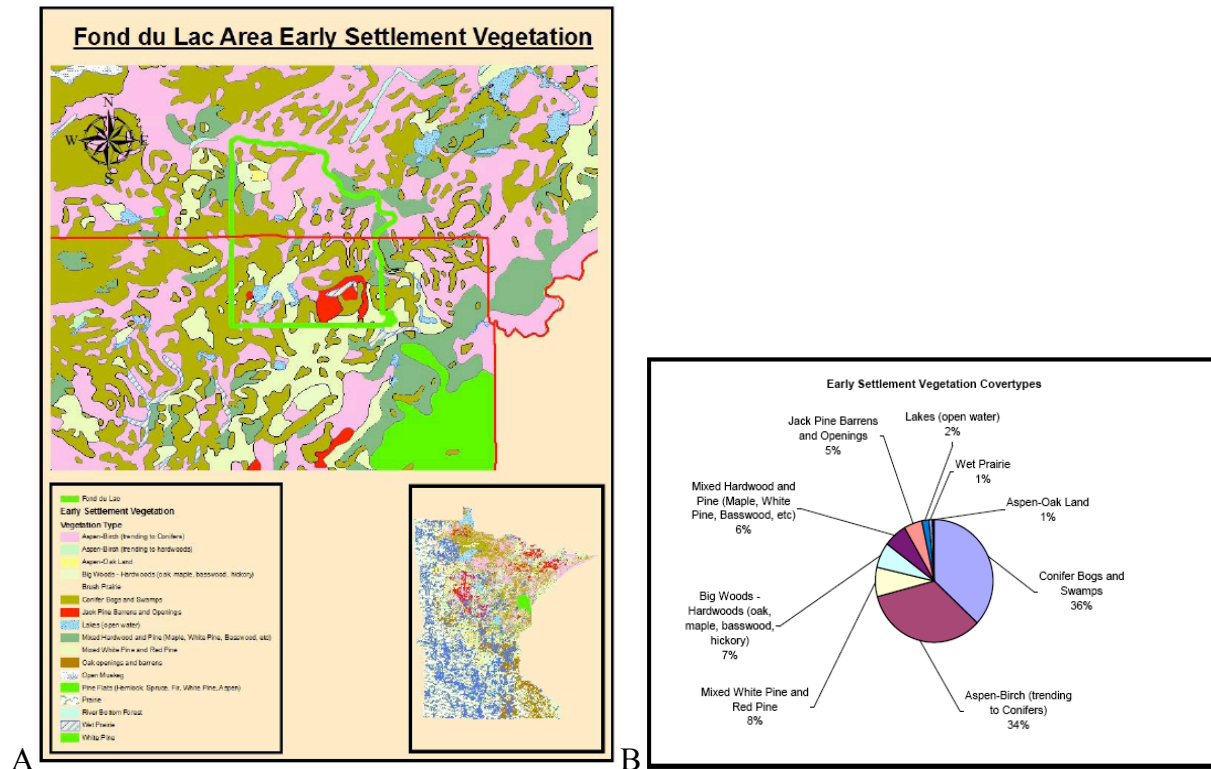


Figure 4. Early settlement vegetation classifications for Fond du Lac Reservation area A) regional context and B) allocation (source: FDL IRMP 2008, pg.36).

History of Resource Rights and Management

Natural resource rights and, more recently, management have coevolved. The 1837 treaty was signed in Minnesota and ceded areas of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota to the United States government. However, Article 5 provided that “*the privilege of hunting, fishing, and gathering the wild rice, upon the lands, the rivers, and lakes included in the territory ceded, is guaranteed to the Indians during the pleasure of the President*” (Graves and Ebbot 2006, p.328). The 1854 treaty with the Chippewa of the Mississippi and Superior Bands was signed at LaPointe, Wisconsin and ceded most of the Arrowhead country to the United States government. This treaty established the Grand Portage, Fond du Lac, and Lake Vermillion reservations.

Article 2 reserved hunting and fishing rights on the ceded territory “*until otherwise ordered by the president*” (Graves and Ebbot 2006, p.328).

The Fond du Lac Reservation formally began managing natural resources as a government function in 1975. This process was initiated by the hiring of one conservation officer. The first undertaking for this newly formed position was to create a conservation code that would regulate hunting, fishing, and gathering on the Fond du Lac Reservation. A Conservation Committee was formed in early 1976 and by fall the Conservation Committee completed the first conservation code. The creation of a code necessitated the hiring of additional staff to enforce regulations, and by the end of 1977 there were three full time Conservation Officers. The Fond du Lac Resource Management Division (RMD) has continued to grow and evolve. In 2009, the staff consists of 59 permanent employee positions, 20-25 seasonal employment positions, and up to 4 high school interns whose work supports its Mission Statement

The FDL RMD is committed to the management, conservation, and sustainability of the natural resources of the Fond du Lac Band, in order to protect the environment on the Fond du Lac Reservation and within its treaty areas. The Resource Management Division will use the tools of research, education and outreach with Band Members, partners and stakeholders to accomplish these goals.

The following timeline⁵ highlights the creation of new programs and key events that have led to the current structure and responsibilities of the Division.

1981- Bureau of Indian Affairs funds a temporary Forester position at Fond du Lac

1984- Fond du Lac Reservation Forester hired marking the beginning of the current Fond du Lac Reservation Forestry Program.

1985- The Grand Portage Band sues the State of Minnesota in federal court claiming the 1854 Treaty gives it the right to hunt and fish in the ceded territory free of State regulation. Up until this time, the State had applied its hunting and fishing laws in the ceded territory to Indians and non-Indians alike. The Fond du Lac and Boise Forte Bands subsequently join the lawsuit in order to consider a settlement.

1988- Fond du Lac Natural Resources Program created, Program Manager hired. This Program is given responsibility for On-Reservation fisheries, wildlife, and wild rice management. The State of Minnesota and the Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, and Boise Forte Bands enter into an agreement whereby the State makes an annual payment to the Bands in exchange for limiting harvest in the 1854 ceded territory. The agreement calls for the establishment of regulations

⁵ Compiled by Tom Howes, FDL RMD

restricting commercial harvest, big game seasons, spearing, netting, and other activities of concern to the State. This agreement, approved by the federal court, does not commit to a legal conclusion as to whether the 1854 Treaty harvest rights remain valid.

1989- The Fond du Lac Band withdraws from the agreement after one year, but the other two Bands remain in the agreement. The Fond du Lac Band establishes harvest regulations for its own members.

1990- The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe sues the State of Minnesota claiming harvest rights in the 1837 Treaty ceded territory, which lies immediately to the south of the 1854 ceded territory. This case raises legal issues very similar to those in the 1854 Treaty case. The court divides the Mille Lacs case into two phases: Phase I will address whether the 1837 Treaty ceded territory harvest rights are valid: if the answer is yes, Phase II will address the scope of those rights, that is, what the Band may actually allow its members to do.

1991- Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission funds a Ceded Territory Wildlife Biologist stationed at Fond du Lac. An Environmental Program Manager is hired marking the beginnings of the Fond du Lac Environmental Program.

1992- The Fond du Lac Band sues the State of Minnesota under both the 1837 Treaty and the 1854 Treaty, both of which it signed. The Fond du Lac Band claims harvest rights in both ceded territories. Like the Mille Lacs case, this one is divided into Phase I and Phase II.

1993- Fond du Lac hires a Ceded Territories Fisheries Biologist to manage and plan for an anticipated ceded territory harvest.

1994 - After a trial, the federal court rules in Phase I of the Mille Lacs case that the 1837 Treaty ceded territory harvest rights are valid. Phase II of the case begins.

1996 - The court rules in Phase I of the Fond du Lac case that the 1854 Treaty ceded territory harvest rights are valid. The court also rules that the Fond du Lac Band's claims under the 1837 Treaty are valid. (The validity of the 1854 Treaty effectively applies to the Grand Portage and Bois Forte Bands as well, because they also signed the 1854 Treaty.)

1996 - The Fond du Lac Band's 1837 Treaty claim is joined with the Mille Lacs case during Phase II of the Mille Lacs case. This is so that Phase II of the 1837 Treaty claims in both cases can be resolved for both Bands together. Phase II of the Fond du Lac Band's 1854 Treaty claims is put on hold until the Mille Lacs case is completed.

1997 - Phase II of the Mille Lacs case is completed. Phase II addresses in detail seasons, bag limits, methods, commercialization and other harvest issues. Most of these issues are resolved by agreement between the Bands and the State, a few of them are resolved by the court. These 1837 Treaty Phase II conclusions apply to all harvest in the 1837 ceded territory by the Mille Lacs Band, the Fond du Lac Band, and several Wisconsin Chippewa Bands that also had signed the 1837 Treaty and had joined the Mille Lacs lawsuit.

1997 - The 8th Circuit federal appeals court affirms the decision of the district court in the Mille Lacs case, finding that the 1837 Treaty ceded territory harvest right is valid.

1999 - The United States Supreme Court affirms the lower court rulings in the Mille Lacs case. This is a final affirmation of the validity of ceded territory harvest rights under the 1837 Treaty.

2000 – With the Mille Lacs case complete, Phase II of the Fond du Lac case begins. The purpose of this Phase II is to address the scope of harvest rights in the 1854 Treaty ceded territory. Negotiations begin to allow the Band and the State to communicate about natural resource concerns, resolve disputes, and deal with ongoing natural resource management issues. To date, negotiations are ongoing.

***Nimbizindawaanaanig* Themes**

Perhaps the most universal and profound impressions made on the team centered on a theme of *disconnect*. Disconnect was perceptible at multiple scales: between individuals and natural resources; between individuals and their social networks; and finally, between individuals and the Ojibwe culture.

Individuals and natural resources

The impression of a disconnect between *individuals and natural resources* resulted from numerous and varied comments about *disuse*, a term used here in reference to the decline in, or outright abandonment of, natural resource activity. In some cases, disuse had occurred in the participant's own life or had been observed in their family context; that is, participants described a decline in personal or inter-generational use of natural resources. Participants also observed disuse indirectly, as fewer people out doing one thing or another. Either way, the impression was made that, for the vast majority, natural resource activities are diminishing in participation, frequency, or necessity.

Individuals and social networks

Our conversations also left the impression that diminished natural resource use was associated with a lack of access to, or the absence of, non-family social networks. Participants described their perceived value of social networks differently; these values are generalized below.

Social networks represent a means for individuals to access knowledge. Participants recognized that, historically, only certain community members have been the guardians, or stewards, of certain types of knowledge. Participants emphasized a difficulty, or inability, to identify and connect with those individuals who are knowledgeable in specific natural resource oriented activities. Brain-tanning, the tanning of hides using brains, was one example of a natural resource skill that was in demand, but for which a knowledgeable teacher could not be easily found (which is not to say that such teachers do not exist in the community). Many participants recognized the FDL Cultural Museum for its offerings of courses on a variety of "traditional" natural resource skills, yet the general impression remained that additional, less formal learning opportunities would also be valued.

Social networks represent a means for individuals to access resources. Through our conversations, we affirmed that many “finished products” are comprised of multiple natural resources (Figure 5). For example, birch bark baskets may contain birch bark, green willow shoots, and sinew. Artisans are just as likely to gather their natural resources as they are to rely upon family or friends, who gift or exchange raw materials. It must also be mentioned that social networks not only represent a means for individuals to *access* knowledge and share resources, but serve also as a means for individuals or groups to *share* knowledge, experience, and resources.

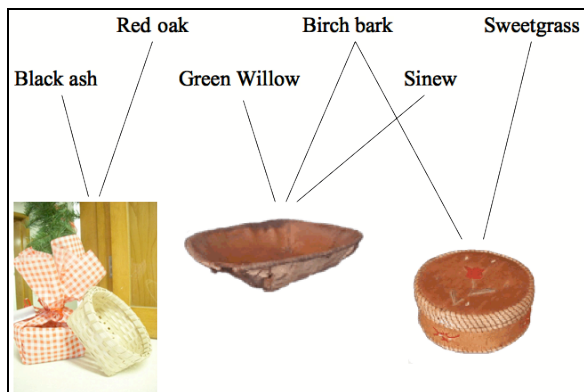


Figure 5. Resources to products (*source of basket images: FDL cultural museum*)

Social networks also interconnect with an informal economy that is fueled, in part, by natural resources. ‘Informal economy’ refers to the economic realm outside of the formal sector, most simply characterized by taxation. It includes gifting, barter, and unreported wage activity. Just as family and friends might share or exchange raw materials, products made of natural resources can be exchanged for other products as part of an informal, or non-monetary economic system.

Social networks are recognized as a means to reinforce social and cultural expectations, or norms. One direct outcome of social networks is the development and reinforcement of relationships. Other potential benefits of social networks are indirect. For example, groups provide a venue in which social and cultural norms (or traditions) can be shared and reinforced, such as the appropriate time of year or method to peel birch bark. This process can also be more direct and intentional. For instance, Fond du Lac’s Ojibwe language group meets with a cultural mission of learning and preserving the language but, of course, is also a social gathering. Yet the

language might be used to discuss any number of subjects, including traditional uses of natural resources. It was noteworthy that the Ojibwe language was an important and recurring theme in our conversations; it is discussed in greater detail below.

On a grander scale, social networks are recognized as an historic and culturally grounded means for what might be described as natural resource governance. The most commonly mentioned example was the wild rice committee, once considered by some participants to be a competent and appropriate body governing the harvest of wild rice. Some participants expressed remorse for the loss of this institution and/or interest in its revival. Similarly, some expressed interest in a more general “cultural” natural resource committee or commission that could work with the existing Resource Management Division. It is important to highlight that value was placed on the work of the RMD, but that there seemed to be an unmet need among the participants for a cultural counterpart. To some, the absence of this counterpart exemplified the perceived disconnect between natural resources and culture. The loss of the Ojibwe language, however, was offered repeatedly as the most obvious and unfortunate outcome of disconnect between natural resources and culture.

Individuals and Ojibwe culture

Our conversations left no doubt as to the perception of disconnect between many individuals and their culture. Overwhelmingly, participants expressed that the Ojibwe language represented an essential, yet atrophied link.

“Well, maybe we are losing it,” they say. “We are losing the Indian culture.” But maybe not – the Indian language is still here. It is only us: we are lost and [therefore] losing everything. Indian traditions and what the Indian came to do long ago, it’s still there. Like I heard an old gentleman say, “We’re not losing our language, the language is losing us.”
– Joe Auginaush, in *Living our Language* (Treuer 2001: p.157)

Languages, like knowledges, customs, and beliefs, vary for social reasons but are also dependent on specific environmental conditions to which people have adapted – what we eat, how food is preserved, the rhythms of work – all depend on where we live (Skutnabb-Kangas 2003, p.19). *Wub-e-ke-new*⁶ says, “The Aboriginal Indigenous peoples of this world have within their languages their understanding of the nature of humanity. Each language contains a legitimate and crucial piece of the knowledge necessary for humanity to survive.” Language, of course, is a

⁶ Excerpt from *We have the right to exist*, Chapter XV, found at <http://www.maquah.net/>

cultural resource, but its connection to natural resources is increasingly recognized. Research has shown a correlation between linguistic and biological diversity (Harmon and Maffi 2002). Languages have been called the DNA of cultures (Skutnabb-Kangas 2003, p.20). Language, and in particular the existence of certain words, reflects local biodiversity and the complexity of ecological relationships.

When a language is lost, so too is much of the embedded knowledge (ecological, cultural, etc.). One FDL participant offered the example of alder (*Alnus rugosa*). The Ojibwe name for alder is *wadoop*, formed from the word *wado*, which means blood clot. A traditional Ojibwe medicinal use for alder is as a topical application to stop bleeding. This example and others demonstrate that language is an important key to understanding the cultural norms and practices. The practice of language equates to the practice of culture; it serves as a means for individuals to connect with their natural and cultural environment. Our conversations left us with many questions posed, but unanswered

- How and where does language/culture connect with peoples' lives?
- How and where does language/culture connect with natural resources?
- Is language a means to foster culturally appropriate learning?
- Should language be a critical component of natural resource related education?

To summarize, Ojibwe culture represents a portal to a deeper knowledge of natural resources but natural resources also represent a portal to deeper knowledge of Ojibwe culture. A better understanding of one should lead to a better understanding of the other. In large part, these connections reside in Ojibwe language. Participants suggested that language represents a resource with the potential to enhance knowledge of both culture and natural resources. A great challenge for all those interested in enhancing natural resource use and/or cultural knowledge will be the reintegration of these two elements and the incorporation of Ojibwe language in this process.

Outlook

Through the *Nimbizindawaanaanig* process we generated an outlook comprised of appropriate and reasonable short, medium, and long-term ideas, initiatives, and issues that were identified over the course of the three days. The ideas and initiatives that follow are intended to serve as starting points in the development of educational programs centered on natural resources. They are based on our discussions about the themes that emerged, and about practical means to address them. We fully accept and expect that their final form, when put into practice, will likely differ from that which is presented below. We recommend, however, that all ongoing and new natural resource endeavors should strive to incorporate three key elements: culture, practice, and management.

Short-term (1 year)

Gitigaan and “Gitigaan Afield”

New collaborations take time and energy to develop. For this reason, early progress often results from wise use of successful, existing groups, initiatives, and projects. The FDL *Gitigaan* (garden) group is an established and recognized community program that successfully addresses natural resources. The original Gitigaan Project was established on the FDL reservation in 1994 as a collaborative effort of FDL, the University of MN Extension and its Carlton County office, and the Pathways to Education program. Project Grow was established as a 10-week program to provide education and information on nutrition and on the growing, harvesting, and preservation of foods, in combination with information about Ojibwe history, culture, and traditions. Initial funding was provided by CSREES (USDA) grant. Gitigaan outlived its initial grant-based funding as well as the eventual withdrawal of Extension partnership, two strong indicators of the program’s success. Today, Gitigaan remains a roughly 10-week session of courses that feature FDL elders, local entrepreneurs, gardeners, and harvesters. In 2008, well over 200 home garden plots were tilled with the support of FDL’s RMD. Additionally, seeds and plants were distributed to interested gardeners.

The *Nimbizindawaanaanig* team recognizes the value of the Gitigaan teachings and its broad gardener network. Moreover, strong and sustained interest in several of the recurring Gitigaan

themes represents an opportunity to further strengthen connections between the FDL community and its natural resource base. The team recommends the development and implementation of “*Gitigaan Afield*” for spring or summer 2009. This could be a series of field-based (outdoor) sessions designed to complement the existing (indoor) sessions offered at the Tribal Center. Examples might include an on-site maple syrup boil, a tree pruning demonstration, a visit to the blueberry prescribed burns, and others activities that would reinforce indoor sessions held earlier in the year, but potentially generate interest among a different, or broader, subset of the FDL community. *Gitigaan Afield* would represent an opportunity to integrate the existing *Gitigaan* programs with outreach efforts and programs of FDL’s RMD, Ojibwe School, and cultural museum, among others.

Plants of the Great Lakes Ojibwe: Short Course Series.

A second recommendation that emerged from the *Nimbizindawaanaanig* process is the development of a series of short courses inspired by *Plants Used by the Great Lakes Ojibwe* (Meeker et al. 1993 for GLIFWC) and other books about wild-harvest and medicinal plants, such as the publications of Frances Densmore). Many of the participants commented that they use the GLIFWC book and would be interested in further education about the plants described within, including locating and identifying medicinal and other useful plants, traditional and appropriate plant use, and resource stewardship. This short course series could represent a means to capitalize on existing interest and resources by providing community members with a different, interactive format through which to explore the knowledge contained in the book and in the broader community. It also dovetails with early efforts by FDL’s RMD to work with community members on identification of culturally important plants and habitats as part of a larger effort to identify and manage for habitat types on tribal lands (see FDL 2008, Integrated Resource Management Plan).

Regalia, Performance & Natural Resources Group

Traditional Ojibwe regalia, performance, and music have connections with natural resources. The team recommends the formation of a social, yet education-oriented group with a focus on the connections between regalia, performance, and natural resources.

Ojibwe Language & Natural Resources Group

The connection between the Ojibwe language and natural resources was perhaps the strongest theme that emerged from this process. For this reason, the team recommends the formation of a social, yet education-oriented group with a focus on the language and natural resources. Existing language groups or “tables” could serve as a platform for more informed conversations about natural resources guided by knowledgeable community members.

In addition to the ideas presented above, we recommend the rapid development of courses, seminars, or group discussions targeting topics of interest that were identified in the process. These include activities oriented toward connecting people with resources: “how to” courses on topics such as brain tanning and “where to find” courses focused on key medicinal and useful plants. Other educational activities might focus on commercial aspects of natural resources, such as sessions on commercial harvest and marketing of non-timber and other types of forest products. These sessions could be linked to FDL’s economic development office and programming. Overall, we see the need for efforts to build and strengthen connections between FDL’s RMD and other areas such as the Ojibwe School, Economic Development, Health and Nutrition, and more. Similarly, activities and programs should strive to connect with FDL youth programs and youth, whenever possible.

Medium-term (2-3 years)

Gatherer/Harvester Program

Nimbizindawaanaanig participants discussed the rich resources within the FDL community, such as knowledge and leaders, but also identified the occasional difficulty in identifying and/or accessing them. To be certain, the basic elements of a social/cultural network centered on natural resources already exist: the Ojibwe school, the FDL cultural museum and the Gitigaan group provide excellent examples. Still, a social network is comprised of many individuals and institutions, and the work already being done will benefit from new additions and new means for interaction. An existing University of MN Extension program model offers an outline for one means to facilitate the growth of this network.

UMN Extension offers three programs that essentially utilize the same model: Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, and Woodland Advisor. These programs provide a structured

knowledge sharing and learning environment focused on important themes under each of the three subject areas. Typically, learners participate as a group, moving through a series of expert taught courses in a predetermined sequence. Possible themes might include plant identification, harvest techniques, plant processing and storage, language and plants, and marketing, among others. “Graduates” of the programs are expected to volunteer within their community for 40 hours in order to fully complete their learning experience. Our team recognizes that this model represents a useful framework, but that the notion of sharing and learning under an “expert” or “master” model may be inappropriate within the FDL community.

Rather than developing an “expert” or “master” model, we envision a model grounded in the traditional notion of Ojibwe leadership – allowing individuals within a group to emerge to share their knowledge, but then to be able to step back and return to being a member of the group. Additionally, instead of limiting a gatherer/harvester program to strictly natural resource knowledge, we recommend that the program should contain complementary and reinforcing cultural elements.

We anticipate several benefits to such a program. First, a gatherer/harvester program will increase the accessibility of the broader FDL community to those individuals who steward knowledge and skills related to cultural interactions with natural resources. Depending on the structure, another benefit of a gatherer/harvester program would be the development of a broader and deeper knowledge base that could be drawn upon to share with other community members. In effect, those who have benefited from the program should be expected to share their knowledge and experiences with others, strengthening and perpetuating cultural and natural resource knowledge and connections through increased participation and interaction. The end result would be a program that gradually builds legitimacy through its respect for local and traditional knowledge, the participation of community members, and a commitment to ongoing sharing and teaching.

Long-term

We recognize that much will change in the coming years and that it is difficult to anticipate the nature and magnitude of change. Rather than attempt to plan detailed projects for the long-

term future, we attempt to identify issues and themes likely to be important to the FDL community.

Population growth

Population growth was identified as an important issue for the FDL community. To a far greater extent than other communities, FDL and other Reservations operate within a constrained resource context. While populations can grow beyond the Reservation boundaries, the Reservation itself cannot expand; it can only strive to acquire more of the allotted and privately held land situated within the Reservation boundaries. Consequently, pressure on limited resources is certain to increase. Access to and availability of resources are certain to underlie future conflicts.

Technology and culture

How can FDL and the RMD advance the use of technology while retaining an intact cultural core? This represents an important question and a challenge that will face resource managers in the coming years. Global Positioning Systems (GPS) represent a technology characterized by increasing accessibility and prevalence in our lives. GPS data and mapping has potential to be an important tool in natural resource management as well as in the way that individuals interact with natural resources. On a grander scale, bio-fuel production and wind power represent two examples of the large-scale technologies that will affect the community and region.

Cultural committee

Over the long-term, interest in a cultural council connected to natural resource management, something along the lines of the former wild rice council, is likely to increase. The FDL RMD should work with other parts of the FDL tribal community to proactively develop a cultural advisory committee and to establish this committee's authority and jurisdiction

Recommendation Domain

With whom did the *Nimbizindawaanaanig* team connect through this process? In other words, whose story are we telling? Equally important, whose voices were not captured through this process? And finally, how do the answers to these questions affect the scope and applications of our recommendations? This section briefly addresses these questions.

The Speakers

Nimbizindawaanaanig participants heavily represented a group that our team characterized as *appreciators* of natural resources. Many were individuals who were identified in advance as natural resources users – whether artisans, hunters, hobbyists, or users of a similar type. In contrast, less represented were those who we characterized as *non-appreciators* or *non-users*. There were two reasons for this imbalance. First, while it was possible to acquire contact information for known and permitted natural resources users, it was more challenging to find publicly accessible contact information for the general population of Band members. Second, those *non-appreciators* or *non-users* for whom we had contact information more frequently declined to participate than those individuals who were known to use natural resources.

- Participants were mostly male (15 of 20, or 75%), but females were fairly well represented (5 of 20, or 25%)
- Participants were adults, by design, but perhaps skewed toward older adults and thus not truly representative of the younger adult population. Using a smaller team, we hope in the near future to have conversations with youth representatives of the FDL community

Bearing the above considerations in mind, what are the implications of our recommendations given the participation and our stated objective of *listening and learning in order to strengthen and expand natural resources programming in FDL*?

Implications

We learned a great deal about the importance of strengthening connections with natural resources among a subset of the community for whom natural resources are an integral part of their lives. We also learned about and summarily recommended some ways that the knowledge and experience of this group might be both deepened and expanded. While we would have

preferred to have more input from women in the FDL community, those with whom we spoke provided valuable insights and information that substantially shaped this report and its recommendations.

Our recommendations are limited in any claim to address the indifference or barriers to natural resource use among non-appreciators and non-users as well as among the youth. It is possible that our recommendations may lead to activities and programming that could reach these groups, but no claim can be made that this is strategic. If programming is developed as a result of this process, it will be important to document the prior natural resource experience of participants in order to evaluate the reach of the programs. Therefore, a final conclusion of the team is the need for additional effort to connect with the non-appreciators and non-users and youth in the FDL community. The difficulty of accessing these groups through the means used in this process suggests that a more focused effort and different approach is likely to be required.

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Websites:

<http://www.fdlrez.com>

<http://www.tolatsga.org/ojib.html>

<http://www.maquah.net/>

<http://www.terralingua.org>

Appendix A: Initial Funding Proposal to the University of Minnesota

Project Description and Rationale

Growing interest in collaboration with American Indian (A.I.) communities on natural resource management and utilization has fostered the creation of two new Extension Educator positions dedicated to the A.I. community and, more recently, to the adoption of a summer internship program. A shared objective of these new positions and programs is to increase Extension's staff and broader institutional knowledge of A.I. culture as well as the A.I. community's current strengths and opportunities. Related to this objective is the implicit need to identify and/or develop tools and practices that will facilitate successful collaboration between Extension and the A.I. community. Indeed, at the recent NRMU retreat in Cloquet, both general conversations and specific comments highlighted the overall sentiment that engagement with A.I. communities by a more representative section of the Extension community is desirable, but that there is a limited understanding with regard to the specific means to engage them and to the particular themes for meaningful engagement. As the newly hired Regional Educator assigned to work with the Fond du Lac community, these concerns are especially pertinent, but their implications extend as well to the future success of institutional collaboration between Extension and the A.I. community. Successful engagement and subsequent collaboration will ultimately be a function of both the interaction between Extension Educators as individuals working with specific American Indian community members, as well as between Extension, the institution, and the American Indian community. To the extent possible, initial endeavors should therefore attempt to incorporate both scales. In this way, cultural learning and needs assessment occur simultaneously for participating individuals and their respective institutions.

Initial challenges confronting those interested in the medium- to long-term objective of Extension - A.I. institutional collaboration are the short-term needs to establish platforms for engagement and to identify broadly captivating themes. One means to meet these short-term needs is to commence engagement with participatory activities involving teams comprised of individuals representing both Extension and the A.I. community. A team-oriented needs assessment, for example, would not only provide an opportunity to focus initial Extension efforts in the A.I. community, but would also represent an opportunity for both individual and institutional learning. This proposal solicits support to use the *Sondeo* method (Hildebrand 1981) to undertake just such a team-oriented needs assessment in the Fond du Lac reservation.

Sondeo is the Spanish term for *sounding out*. This participatory and interdisciplinary method was developed for rapid assessment of community-defined education, development, or other priorities, and to place these priorities within broader social, economic, and environmental contexts. The *Sondeo* method is participatory to ensure the direct input of community members in the assessment of local priorities and needs assessment. It requires the participation of interdisciplinary team members to facilitate a more balanced treatment of critical factors such as age and gender relations, formal and informal economies, and local environmental considerations. The assessment is rapid so that limited resources such as time, money, and goodwill – both on the part of the assessment team and the community participants – may be used most productively. The training of team members in the method can be completed in a single-day workshop, while the complete assessment process can be completed in a period of 3-5 days. The commitment of Fond du Lac community informants would be limited to interviews of 30 minutes to a few hours, depending on individuals' interest and availability. The principal output of the *Sondeo* method is a report – coauthored by the assessment team – that provides rich community context and that specifies community-identified opportunities, challenges, and priorities. This document provides a common platform upon which future collaboration can be built.

Outputs & Outcomes

There are three specific objectives for the Fond du Lac *Sondeo*:

1. To bring together and train a diverse group of Extension staff and A.I. community members in a proven interdisciplinary method for rapid participatory assessment of community-identified goals / priorities;
2. To develop a shared, grassroots vision for the first phase of Extension / FDL collaboration;
3. To conduct an activity that will enhance the knowledge base of individual Extension Educators as well as Extension as an institution.

Timeline

Ideally, a *Sondeo* should be undertaken as early as possible when beginning work in a new community. This approach prevents the formation of false preconceptions based on early impressions that may occur through opportunistic engagement with the community of interest. The method itself requires no more than one week for both team training and execution of the assessment. Nevertheless, it is also important to consider the need for new employee orientation and training that will be necessary prior to beginning my work in the Fond du Lac community. It will also be important to assimilate this activity into already established timelines of the other assessment team members. Given these considerations, it would be reasonable to anticipate that the *Sondeo* could be conducted over the course of one week in May or June of 2008, but it is not possible to provide an exact timeframe.

Estimated Budget ^{/1}		
Per Diem, Meals	\$1000.00	\$25/person/day: estimate provided by Jim & Joe's
CFC Facilities	\$325.00	CFC Meeting Room @ \$65 / day
Materials & Publishing	\$50.00	Training and meeting materials and printing expenses for final report
Total	\$1375.00	
<i>/1. Assumes 5 days with an assessment team comprised of 4 Extension staff and 4 Fond du Lac staff</i>		

Appendix B. Fond du Lac Reservation Business Council (RBC) Approval

From: Sandi Davis
Sent: Tuesday, October 14, 2008 1:52 PM
To: reggiedefoe@fdlrez.com
Subject: FW: U of M Extension Survey Project - Approved

From: portal@fdlrez.com [<mailto:portal@fdlrez.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, October 14, 2008 1:51 PM
To: Tom Howes; reginalddefoe@fdlrez.com; Sandi Davis
Subject: U of M Extension Survey Project - Approved

Your proposal,

Title: U of M Extension Survey Project
Description:

The FDL Resource Management Division is working with the U of M Extension Program to familiarize their newly hired staff with Tribal Issues. As part of the orientation for this person and the Extension Program they have proposed to conduct a survey of Band Members.

has been Approved by the council on 9/16/2008 9:00:00 AM.

Thank You,

Fond du Lac Administrative Staff

Appendix C. University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

TO : dwilsey@umn.edu, danewman@umn.edu, beau0181@umn.edu,

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) category #2 SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; STANDARDIZED EDUCATIONAL TESTS; OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

Study Number: 0809E46241

Principal Investigator: David Wilsey

Title(s):
The Fond du Lac Natural Resources "Biizindaanindaa"
