

Brittany Luby, Margaret Lehman, Andrea Bradford, Samantha Mehlretter, and Jane Mariotti (eds.), with Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation. *Manomin: Caring for Ecosystems and Each Other*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2024. 240 pages. ISBN:978-1-77284-090-2. \$29.95 paperback.

Reading this book felt like a gift. I read it in small chunks, during those sacred quiet moments on my maternity leave, while my infant daughter dreamt on my chest. In the depth of northern Ontario winters, I imagined Manoomin (spelled with “oo” to honour the nation where I learnt to harvest), resting in the mud under slow moving shallow rivers and lakes, awaiting to emerge again when the moment was right. In many ways, I was also doing exactly that. As I read, I felt affirmed in my love and work with Manoomin. It filled me, as I imagine it will for other Manoomin harvesters and scholars, with renewed energy. This edited volume, while made up of contributors from various backgrounds, experiences, and relationships with Manoomin, all pointed to Manoomin’s important role in Indigenous foodways, as a relative, a teacher, a friend, and a guide. The contributors have shown that the lives of Manoomin and the Anishinaabe are intertwined and depend on each other. While the book undoubtedly will have impact in the hands of non-Indigenous scholars and in university classrooms, it reads as though it is written directly for Anishinaabe harvesters, processors, scholars, and students. Indeed, its intention is to share this knowledge to encourage Anishinaabe to “reclaim their culture and their fields” (p. 17). The full-coloured detailed photography throughout captures the various stages of Manoomin’s growth, key aspects in processing, and the human relationships that at once sustain and are sustained by this plant. As a community-based researcher and academic, this is a book I will eagerly share with my Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues in Indigenous food systems and governance research, as well as with community partners, fellow harvesters, and students. It is a guide through all stages of relationship with Manoomin – from first introductions, to caring for the ecosystems that support it, to understanding the colonial impositions that attempt to strangle it, and finally, to reaffirming and strengthening the thousands year long relationship Anishinaabeg have built with Manoomin.

The most important element of the resurgence of Manoomin is Anishinaabe leadership and caretaking. *Manomin*, with its curation of diverse contributors, encourages Anishinaabe harvesters interested in revitalizing this relationship. Its chapters take the reader through key moments in this long-term bond, beginning in Chapter 2 with Edward Benton-Banai’s teachings of the Anishinaabe migration from the East to the West, guided by instructions to stop and rest along the way when they find “the food that grows on the water” (p. 24). This oral history is confirmed by the archaeological record clearly laid out in Chapter 3. While there is discrepancy between the oral history and archaeological record as to the length of this relationship, the decision to place the migration story first signals the editors’ Indigenous methodology, which centres Indigenous knowledges. As well, the author of Chapter 3 explicitly states that Elders’ stories ought also to be sought as evidence.

Throughout this edited volume, Manoomin's sentience and agency is asserted. Chapter 4 positions Manoomin as a teacher, not merely a crop under human control. Instead, Manoomin offers itself up as a gift when in reciprocal relationships with humans. Chapter 5 describes what being in a healthy and reciprocal relationship means from an Anishinaabe, and Anishinaabemowin, perspective. Pitawanakwat reminds us that it is through a commitment of time to the plant that we come to know *who* they are, not just *what* it can do for us.

Only after spending time with Manoomin, getting to know the plant and the ecosystem that supports it, are we able to notice changes that harm its growth such as water level fluctuations, invasive species, and/or settlement. Chapter 6 outlines some of the ways that environmental changes have disrupted Manoomin, and Chapter 7 connects these disruptions to environmental dispossession, a process through which settler-colonialism (and its associated laws, Acts, industries, and private land ownership) has attempted to disconnect Anishinaabeg and Indigenous foodways, families, communities, lifeways, language, and governance. Yerxa shows us Manoomin's medicine in healing those relationships in her own story of reconnecting with her grandfather through harvesting and processing the plant. Her chapter importantly demonstrates the ways that Manoomin is much more than a food source - it is, as Yerxa's great-grandfather states, "the spiritual foundation of [Anishinaabeg] people and government" (p. 142). Yerxa's storytelling expertly weaves together the role Manoomin plays at the intersection between personal relationships, politics, and love, and will resonate deeply with everyone who has harvested manoomin in their family's traditional rice beds. Chapter 9 concludes this compilation by reminding Anishinaabeg readers of the sacredness in their very existence. Relationships with plant relatives require not only the health of the plant, but also the human. She encourages the reader to love and care for themselves too: "As you exist, so do they; there is no separation" (p. 157).

The recipes that are interspersed between these chapters on governance, love, meaning, migration, and archaeology offer another of the myriad ways we are connected to Manoomin. Cooking deeply enmeshes us - we must spend time gently soaking the grains with our hands, watching them change as they heat up, thoughtfully combining these grains with other nourishing foods, and finally sharing this meal with those we love. What more intimate way to connect with Manoomin than to physically ingest the seeds, where they are broken down into pieces that build our own body? Each recipe includes its own lessons and teachings, for example, Recipe 2, "*Onuah Lakchi/Manomin, berries and love*", reads like a love poem to the cook, reminding us that we exist along a thread between those that came before, to those we are feeding, to those that will come after.

Following Manoomin's teachings, the editors offer a final gift by sharing all they have learnt about publishing and protecting Indigenous knowledges and data sovereignty. It is clear that the goal of this book is to uplift and enliven Indigenous harvesters, eaters, students, and scholars. *Manomin: Caring for Ecosystems and Each*, sets a precedent for how Indigenous food systems must/ought/can be written about - as a gift of knowledge *from* Indigenous harvesters,

thinkers, cooks, eaters, *for* Indigenous harvesters, thinkers, cooks, eaters. From start to finish, this book reveals the deeply relational methodologies and ethics espoused by Luby and her team. While each chapter can stand on its own, as a compilation it effectively captures the multitudes Manoomin exists in. It is a book that is suited for multiple settings – in the hands of Indigenous harvesters and scholars, non-Indigenous scholars, a classroom, or a community gathering. My only suggestion and hope is that this book is the first of many volumes to follow – while reading, I found myself imagining second and third volumes, filled with more recipes, art, poetry, songs, and stories from a widening circle of communities as Manoomin and Anishinaabeg continue to revive their relationships across Turtle Island.

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