

2015 WCTWS Technical Training Summary Ojibwe Cultural Awareness Training

Submitted by Lesa Kardash, Newsletter Editor

The training began the evening of June 3 at the Lac du Flambeau campground. A traditional feast was prepared and participants were provided a diverse, delicious meal laid out on blankets, which included wild rice casserole, fish, and strawberries and cream to add on top of fried bread.

Following the meal, everyone was invited to sit in a circle on the ground and partake in a welcome ceremony led by several tribal members. A pipe ceremony was conducted whereby tobacco was shared with all present to hold onto during a prayer and then collected. Tribal pipe carriers then lit and began smoking the tobacco and white sage in their ceremonial pipes. The tobacco was an offering to express gratitude to the spirits and allowed communication with the spirits to take place. A talking circle was held. The pipe carriers present held a staff adorned with feathers and introduced themselves. Each person around the circle stood up, held the staff, and said who we were, where we came from, and shared what we hoped to learn from the training. A pipe filled was passed around to all present. During the latter part of ceremony, we were blessed with a light, refreshing rain which eventually becoming a steady rain. We were also welcomed by several nearby loons. After the ceremony concluded, some participants shared stories around a campfire. People either camped at the campground or headed over to the Lake of the Torches Resort to retire for the remainder of the evening.

The second day of the training was held in the Lac du Flambeau Convention Center at the Lake of the Torches Resort, with 26 in attendance not including tribal members and guest speakers. The day began with a prayer shared by Biskakone St. Germain. We were also welcomed by Butch St. Germain, Lac du Flambeau Tribal President. Kekek Jason Stark, a Lac Courtes Oreilles tribal attorney and Dylan Jennings, a Bad River member and a public information officer for GLIFWC, provided us with an introduction to tribal governance and sovereignty. We were given an Ojibwe language lesson and learned about the importance of language from Wesley Ballinger and Levi Tadgerson. They shared information about Anishinaabe identity, including the naming ceremony and the three levels of recognition. By the end of the lesson, we all managed to say our name and where we come from. “Nindizhinikaaz Lesa Kardash. Nindoonjibaa Verona, Wisconsin.” Jennifer Burnet, GLIFWC Outreach Specialist, presented information on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), including the different protocols tribes have in requesting knowledge and how to respect and validate the knowledge that is shared with you. Stories were shared about harvesting natural resources by Brooks BigJohn and Tom Maulson. Latisha Coffin and Owen Maroney explored natural and native foods important to the tribes including ways they were trying to reconnect tribal members with those foods for healthy living. Larry Wawronowicz, LDF Natural Resources Director, shared information about on reservation resource management, providing an overview on the inventory of lakes, wetlands, and forestland they manage, while James Zorn (GLIFWC Executive Director) provided a background of off-

reservation management and GLICWC's role. The final presentation was a who, what, where, why, and when on consultation by Ann McCammon-Soltis, Director of the Division of Intergovernmental Affairs with GLIFWC. She provided information on how agencies and other organizations should approach tribes when making decisions and how to reach consensus with tribes. The training concluded with prayer and song by Dylan Jennings. All participants were provided a packet of information on numerous topics ranging from Ojibwe treaty rights, the importance of manoomin (wild rice), traditional tobacco use, and native food recipes.

Everyone had opportunities to ask questions of the speakers throughout the training and enhance their understanding of Ojibwe culture. Participant evaluations indicated that the training was very beneficial, topics covered were of great interest, their expectations were met, and they supported the training to be offered again.

The Wisconsin Chapter of The Wildlife Society would like to thank everyone involved in this training. We would especially like to thank Dr. Jonathan Gilbert, Wildlife Section Leader for GLIFWC, for his willingness to oversee the planning for the training, and to all of the tribal members and guests who shared their time and knowledge, creating a welcoming environment for everyone to learn.