

*Fred Ackley Jr.:* There's an old Indian saying that to live here and understand the world, you've got to love it. Some people love money, some people love material things.

I love that rice, I do. I love that rice and that lake out there. I've loved it all my life.

I'm 65 now, so that's 55 years that I've actually been out there somewhere doing rice. My mom made us go pick it and buy our own school clothes. So I learned the different things of that Manoomin (wild rice), what it does for me. These two little bony arms, once I get going out there, I don't want to quit.

I've got this rhythm. They call it out, "Wham, wham, wham, wham! Chush, chush, chush, chush." That's the rhythm. Now a poler, he keeps up with that rice. He goes into the rice stuff and tries to get the best heads he sees. So that guy's rhythm gets all them plants on both sides, as much as we can get in, every two hits. He's poling, I'm keeping that tap, chush, chush, chush, chush. In my mind, every time I hit a new plant, I'm saying miigwech, thank you.

At every chush, chush, miigwech, chush, chush, miigwech in my mind, and then the rice comes in for me, because I'm honoring and praying to that rice, giving it that respect that's gonna keep me and my partner going, no matter if I'm poling or the guy tapping the rhythm. When I touch them cedar sticks on that rice and it comes off, I know them babies are gonna eat, my drum's gonna be fed.

Life's gonna go on for another year. That's gratitude. My grandma used to call it roasting and parching. She liked to use the word roasting better because of the aroma and what she did with her hands and fire and tools she used to make that come out dehydrated enough to last all winter, for five years maybe even. If you don't get it wet or if you store it right, it'll be good for ya, that medicine.

Miigwech.

In my growing up, in my traditions, the older people told me that the Creator gave us this manoomin to help us survive for our time that we spend here with 'em. It's the Creator's food. And that Mother Earth, she gives it to us to use. That's why they call it "food that grows on the water."

So I'm trying to keep that for all the Anishinaabe people, them prayers going, and of eating that food every year. Because we believe if we stop that tradition, that the world's going to stop. That's why it's important for the Indian people to keep on with our traditions and our spiritual thinking. Because if we stop, what if the world does stop?