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# POLITICAL ENTRENCHMENT IN AN OJIBWA WILD RICE ECONOMY

Robert Jarvenpa\*

**ABSTRACT**—Immunity from both state ricing regulations and the competition of white harvesters characterizes the protective legal niche occupied by Ojibwa Indians who gather wild rice in the Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota. Since 1937 the economic benefits of the Rice Lake rice beds have become restricted to an increasingly exclusive membership of socially and genetically interrelated harvesters from several nearby Indian communities. It appears that this relatively favorable political-economic situation has enhanced the sensitivity of Rice Lake harvesters to current ricing problems encountered by Indians throughout northern Minnesota, and the institution of a rice auction has become an ideological arena in which the opposing political attitudes and economic interests of Indians and whites clash, but without upsetting business transactions.

Almost 70 years have passed since Albert E. Jenks (1901) published his classic monograph on a unique aspect of the economy of Indian groups living in the western Great Lakes region, *The Wild Rice Gatherers of the Upper Lakes—A Study in American Primitive Economics*. Although dated, Jenks' monograph remains as the only comprehensive, cross cultural study of this special manifestation of aboriginal economic life. As such, it has influenced later culture area classifications (Kroeber, 1939:89). Profound changes have since taken place, not the least important of which is white commercialization of wild rice—a development which began in the 1890s and has increased exponentially ever since. This paper attempts to reflect some of the change by analyzing information on Ojibwa wild rice gathering collected in September 1969 at Rice Lake in the Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge in north-central Minnesota.

The persistence of special seasonal ricing camps until quite recently (perhaps as late as 1964) was a prime factor in selection of Rice Lake as the locus of investigation. A short term mono-floral economy provided the focus for these fall camps, which were physically separated from the more permanent communities. Because such camps probably existed longer at Rice Lake than elsewhere, the potential for reconstructing facets of a traditional ricing complex is most favorable at this site.

This paper, offered as a document of contemporary harvesting activity at Rice Lake, attempts mainly to cast light on two general phenomena:

1. **The pattern and degree of change in the ricing complex as it relates to the local Indian economy.**
2. **Attitudinal positions about changing ricing activities, particularly as seen in emerging Indian-white/Indian-government political confrontations.**

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The brief period of field work (three days) forced the writer to rely heavily upon observation of a non-participant nature. This limitation proved to be advantageous in analyzing relationships of human activity and movement to the physical landscape, material items and their utilization, and groupings and confrontations (e.g., the rice auction), all of which required minimal verbal interpretation. Where possible, direct questioning was employed to fill in gaps in observed behavior, to gain specific historical information, and to elicit attitudes about rice harvesting.

### **Geographical Setting**

Edward Tanner's description of Rice Lake in 1820 (Jenks, 1901:1035) is an appropriate introduction to a discussion of the geography of the field setting:

The Indians around Sandy Lake (Aitkin County, Minnesota) in the month of September, repair to Rice Lake, to gather their rice. In no other place does it grow in as large quantities as these. This lake is about 5 miles long and 3 broad. It might, perhaps, be called a Marrais, for the water is not over 5 feet deep, and its surface is almost entirely covered with rice. It is only in morasses, or muddy bottoms that this grain is found.

The fact that Ojibwa Indians from the Sandy Lake (presently Big Sandy Lake) area, among other local groups, still harvest at Rice Lake indicates some cultural continuity for the region. Today, as in Tanner's time, it is regarded as one of the most productive natural wild rice producing lakes in North America. The luxuriant stands of wild rice and other aquatic plants attract great numbers of migrating waterfowl and were the prime reason for setting the area aside as a federal wildlife refuge in 1935 after a succession of drought years (United States Department of the Interior, 1966). Since that time refuge officials have cooperated with local Indians in setting seasons, hours and load regulations for harvesting. Through the years there has been a telescoping of participant harvesters; prior to 1937 both whites and Indians utilized the lake, but thereafter federal regulations have favored exclusively Indian harvesters, and the local Indian ricing committees have limited

the harvester group to a more restricted body geographically and socially. A few families of Ojibwa live in and near the community of East Lake, which borders the refuge.

The present relevance of the foregoing rests in the fact that it is possible to delimit a fairly well defined human population which annually utilizes the same physical-biological setting. The definability of the population and its exploited resource, and the relative stability of the latter commodity provide an element of control of the subject matter.

The Rice Lake area is part of the level, poorly drained marsh-bog landscape of the upper Mississippi River drainage zone.

There are very few places where the actual shoreline is wooded, since about 80 per cent of its perimeter is open bog consisting of a wide band of cane, cattails, and floating sedges on the lake. This general configuration of topography and vegetation provides few *natural* spots for canoe put-in points and associated camps for the rice harvesters. Significantly, one wedge of woods which approaches the shoreline, and is adjacent to present day ricing activity, formerly contained a ricing camp, which reputedly has been abandoned for several decades. The present day put-in point, which is also adjacent to a historical ricing camp, is entirely artificial, consisting of a piled earth extension to a refuge maintenance road on the north end of the lake.

Wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*) and other emergent water plants cover roughly 80 per cent of the lake surface area. A 1950 survey map (Revsbeck and Knedel, 1950) indicates areas of scattered wild rice throughout most of the lake, with two exceptionally concentrated beds, one on the northwest shore (near the put-in) and the other on the south shore. Although 20 years have elapsed, this still appears to be the general distribution of wild rice in the lake. Indeed, the Indians speak of "north" and "south" beds and prepare their harvesting activity accordingly. However, the northern bed appears to have extended itself eastward since 1950, so that it now flanks most of the north shore.

### **Socio-Economic Patterns**

At the time of the writer's field work, Indians were just beginning a 10-day harvesting season at Rice Lake. Participant harvesters (104 on September 8 and 108 on September 9) drive to the put-in point on the north end of Rice Lake each morning and wait until 9 a.m. before launching their canoes. Refuge officials and the local Indian ricing committee designated an 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily harvest schedule for a 10-day season (September 8-17 of the year reported) and limited the activity to 60 canoes, or 120 harvesters. A 10-day season has been standard in the past, but there have been annual variations in hours and number of canoes allowed. Being within a federal refuge, the lake is not affected by state ricing regulations (except those specific provisions affecting the types and uses of equipment), and it is immune from non-Indian harvesters.

Participant harvesters appear to form a cohesive, close-knit group of genetically interrelated people, including

Indians from East Lake, the Big Sandy Lake area and Mille Lacs Lake. Some have resided and worked in the Twin Cities, but give a reservation address to maintain social links and the benefit from ricing. In the recent past a greater number of Indian communities in northern Minnesota gathered at Rice Lake. Only within the last two or three seasons have local Indians been able to fill the quota with their own members.

### **The ricing teams**

Although the brief period of field work did not permit a precise delineation of genealogical relationships, refuge officials provided by name, a record of all of the participant harvesters for September 8 and 9 as well as the respective harvest of rice (in pounds) for each canoe party. Twenty-two out of 54 canoe teams, almost 40 per cent, are husband and wife combinations. Judging by the frequency of similar surnames (Mink, Sand, and Scott), it is evident that a good number of the pairs, while not husband and wife, are still composed of primary relatives (e.g., brother-brother, father-son, brother-sister; but few, if any, sister-sister teams). This is supported by the fact that the identical surname is listed twice for a pair only in a few instances, suggesting that the other pairs belong to the same nuclear family. Under this assumption, at least 19 canoe parties are composed of primary relatives. There are probably other primary pairs which are obscured by changed surnames. Inferentially, it appears that one is far more likely to harvest with a primary relative or a marriage partner than with a more distant relative or friend.

It would be interesting to analyze, in turn, the consanguineal and affinal links of all the individuals gathered at Rice Lake. The ties should be intricate and numerous since the present East Lake, Sandy Lake, and Mille Lacs Lake Ojibwa groups have a close historical association. Of greater significance is the fact that 39 out of 54 canoe teams are male-female combinations. There are 11 all male teams and only four all female teams. The overwhelming presence of opposite-sexed canoe pairs undoubtedly represents a continuing cultural tradition in the division of labor, with males poling and directing the canoes through the beds and the females beating off the ripe heads of rice into the canoes. In no instance of an opposite-sexed team was a woman seen propelling the canoe, although she might assist the standing poler by paddling from a seated position.

The age distribution of the harvesting group can only be estimated roughly. The age range was probably from 20-80 years with a mean around 35-40 years. A good indicator of the age spread is the predominance of spoken Ojibwa — a language rare among most young Indians. There was no need for using English except to communicate with white rice buyers and refuge personnel. Undoubtedly there is some economic pressure favoring the older, more skilled harvesters, although it is not known why the 60-canoe capacity was not filled.

Refuge officials keep close daily records of harvest information, primarily because they claim eight per cent of the entire yield for reseeded purposes. Refuge policy requires that an entire day's rice harvest, except what is

kept for consumption, be sold to one buyer only. This results in a congregation of buyers at the end of the day (see section on Political Cleavage and the Rice Auction) and establishes a daily uniform price per pound, which serves to increase the maneuverability of numerical data.

Although daily canoe team yields vary from 66 pounds (two females) to 377 pounds (apparently a brother and sister combination), the amounts gathered do not appear to be random or based upon good or bad fortune. The entire 10-day record would illustrate this point better, but even a two-day range indicates that "high" yield rice gatherers are consistently high, and low return ricers consistently low. There is no obvious correlation between high vs. low success and sex structure of the canoe team. The ability to gather large amounts of rice is not a function of physical strength or endurance, but rests in the ability to locate the thickest stands and to knock rice into the canoe most efficiently.

Using the first day's harvest total (9,161 pounds) to compute an average canoe party load of 176.2 lbs. (Table 1), it may be of some value to estimate the average harvesting rate on an hourly basis. Although official ricing hours were 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., refuge personnel did not permit harvesters to drive down to the put-in point until 8:00 a.m. About an hour was then used up in talking and preparing equipment, so that the actual launching time was around 9:00 a.m. for most parties and they were in the water and beyond sighting by 9:30 and probably in the distant ricing areas until about 10 a.m. Very few parties remained on the water for the entire legal time, which may indicate only an adjustment to limited stands of sufficiently ripened wild rice. More intensive study would reveal the relationships of harvesting pressure to wild rice resources and perhaps illustrate the operation of some consciously applied "conservation" measures. Such measures probably represent only a portion of a system of resource management that serves to keep rice crops within viable limits for human consumption. Other elements of this maintenance system may include the "failure" to fill established canoe quotas and the differential allocation of harvesters to rice beds by a ricing leader or by less obvious control pressure.

Most teams were back at the put-in by 3:30 p.m., which would have entailed a cessation of actual harvesting around 2:30 p.m. If a minimal half hour is deducted for resting and eating, the "average" canoe party spent just four hours in concentrated harvesting activity. Applying this estimate, the average canoe party harvested at the rate of 44.05 pounds per hour on September 8 and at 33.85 pph. on September 9. Certainly some caution is needed if such figures are to be used for extrapolation backward in time.

#### Economic estimates

Buyers paid \$9,945.18 on September 8 and \$8,342.68 (Table 1) on September 9 for the total day's harvest minus the 8 per cent refuge share. The mean canoe team income for these days was \$191.25 and \$154.49 respectively. In order to compute a rough estimate of the average canoe party's income for the ten-day season, the mean incomes for the first two days were averaged, yield-

ing \$172.87, and that figure was simply multiplied by ten. The resultant figure is \$1,728.70. However, it should be pointed out that as the rice progressively ripens, the yields are often larger toward the end of the ten-day season. In addition, the first day's buying price is usually the season's lowest, the raw rice value steadily increasing throughout the ten-day period. As noted in Table 1, the Rice Lake crop increased by six cents per pound in one day, representing an added financial output of about \$500.00 for the buyer. Thus, the \$1,728.70 figure may be considered a decidedly low estimate for canoe parties selling their entire ten-day harvest for cash. It appears, however, that most, if not all, harvesters retain the rice from the last two or three days of the season for winter consumption. Future investigation is needed to validate the exact pattern in this respect as well as methods of home processing. Presently it is assumed that the retention of rice for food balances out the increase in rice yields and prices, making \$1,728.70 per canoe team a reasonable estimate.

The \$1,728.70 amount probably represents a sizeable, if not predominant, portion of a Minnesota Indian ricing family's annual cash income. Coming in a short period in the fall of the year, such a cash income would drastically influence spending patterns, providing a convenient winter larder and funds for the immediate expenses of school children. Ricing incomes would be considerably greater for skillful teams, and it is possible that some families benefit from the returns of more than one canoe party. An indication of the profitability (or perceived profitability) of Rice Lake harvesting is given by a Fond du Lac Indian man who had gathered wild rice for 35 years at Rice Lake before the Fond du Lac group was excluded. He recalls one family (it is not known if this included more than one canoe party) which made \$8,000 in one season several years ago at Rice Lake. If this is accurate, no doubt it is also exceptional.

The fact that local Indians place great value upon this particular site tends to be reinforced in the ricing committee's policy of creating an increasingly exclusive group of rice gatherers. Theoretically, it would be interesting to

TABLE 1. An Integration of Wild Rice Harvest Data and Monetary Indices — Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge — 1969.

	September 8 (52 canoes — 104 harvesters)	September 9 (54 canoes — 108 harvesters)
Day's Total Harvest in lbs. . . . .	9,161	7,313
Mean Canoe Party Load (lbs.) . .	176.2	135.4
8% Refuge Quota (lbs.) . . . . .	732.9	585
Final Buyer's Bidding Price (per lb.) . . . . .	\$ 1.18	\$ 1.24
Value of Day's Full Harvest . . . .	\$10,809.98	\$9,068.12
Approximate Buyer's Investment (92% of Total Harvest) . . . . .	\$ 9,945.18	\$8,342.68
Mean Canoe Party Income . . . . .	\$ 191.25	\$ 154.49
Mean Daily Canoe Party Income Based on Two-Day Interim . . . . .	\$ 172.87	
Projected Minimal Mean Canoe Party Income for Ten-Day Harvest Season . . . . .	\$1,728.70 (Ten-Day Season)	

learn if any analogies could be drawn between this type of specialized resource hoarding and the intensifying "kinship/stranger dichotomy" characteristic of an entire northern Ojibwa band isolate, noted by Dunning (1959: 70).

### **Political Cleavage and the Rice Auction**

The picture offered thus far places the Rice Lake Indians in a rather privileged position. This does not remove all sensitivity they may have for ricing problems encountered elsewhere. At some time most of the harvesters have probably competed directly with white harvesters on non-reservation waters and have certainly been subject to state ricing regulations on reservation waters. Substantial publicity has been given recently to the general dissatisfaction of Minnesota Indians with wild rice laws and Conservation Department licensing. Although dissension has been increased by particular ricing legislation, such as the controversial four-county act (Minnesota Statutes 84.151, 1969), the basic conflict in ideology is not nourished by any specific legal technicality. Animosity lies in a deeper disagreement with the precept that:

Under Minnesota laws the State owns all wild rice growing in public waters in its sovereign capacity and for the benefit of all its people (Moyle and Kruger, 1969:3).

The Ojibwa have generally claimed priority rights to the "ricing industry," maintaining that whites have usurped their rights and despoiled harvest methods (Coleman, 1953:86). Indeed, these were the precise grievances voiced by the Indian auctioneer at Rice Lake. His argument encompasses four points:

1. White ricers have destroyed numerous valuable ricing beds primarily due to their lack of knowledge in managing wild rice production as the Indians have done for centuries.
2. The Indians of Minnesota have rights by treaty over all water bodies (and thereby should have rights over wild rice growing within water bodies), but these rights have not been upheld.
3. The power of managing wild rice growth, harvesting, and commercialization should be in the hands of Indian directors.
4. Legal-historical research and future court action will eventually return both land and water rights to the Indians.

Similar views are expressed by a middle-aged Ojibwa man from East Lake whom some of the local whites consider radical and even militant. Shoulder length hair, a goatee, and beaded peace symbol arm patches make him an outstanding figure. His mimeographed paper, "Wild Rice and Minnesota Ojibway Indians," is an articulate defense of Indian resource rights:

The Ojibway Indians reserved the wild rice as one of their principal natural resources when they made treaties with the United States. They made such negotiations when they were recognized as a sovereign nation . . . For purposes of clarification, wild rice and water rights of the Ojibway nation will go hand in hand, in their presentation for suitable legislation for the Ojibway Indians in this state (Aubid).

Sensitivity to the political and economic pitfalls of contemporary ricing may be enhanced by the unique protective niche which Rice Lake harvesters have been able to achieve. In fact, the Indian ricing committee's recruitment of largely local Indian harvesters in recent years has gained the resentment of at least a few of the local whites. These persons recall a majority of white harvesters on the lake prior to 1937, emphasizing that present Indians "want it all (the rice) for themselves." In its dealings with the refuge management, the Indian ricing committee has successfully manipulated regulatory policies to its advantage. One season, for example, the refuge proposed a 60-canoe limit for the lake. The committee, however, convinced officials that the lake could support only 30 canoes in that particular season, thereby effectively excluding some of the peripheral Indian groups (presumably those from Fond du Lac, White Earth, and Leech Lake). Presently the local contingent has been able to fill the 60-canoe quota with its own members, even if this involves recruiting relatives from as far away as the Twin Cities.

### **The one-buyer system**

A unique feature of the Rice Lake ricing complex is the institution of an auction in which the entire harvest for each day is sold to the highest bidder. In purely descriptive terms, the auction can be entertaining. It gains more meaning when viewed as a white-Indian confrontation in which opposing interests and ideologies clash, but not to the extent of upsetting business transactions.

The arena of interaction is near the lake side entrance of a large refuge equipment-storage building that is situated about 200 feet north of the put-in point. After beaching canoes and bagging the rice in 50-60 lb. flour or grain sacks, harvesters carry or haul their bags by wheelbarrow to the storage building door. Amidst a long line of bags each canoe party places its share of the day's harvest. White rice buyers were observed milling about the parking area and put-in point before most of the harvesters had returned from the lake. At one time or another all buyers walked down to the shore and inspected rice in the canoes for moisture content, impurities, ripeness, and size and type of kernels (there are about 52 commercially recognized grades). Because the high bidder purchases the entire day's harvest, the would-be buyers must get an idea of the overall quality of the grain. On September 8, four dealers were present, all men, and apparently all independent dealers or jobbers who sell raw rice to processing companies.

At about 4:30 p.m. on September 8, the male harvesters, who had been talking in small groups near the equipment shed, formed a semi-circle around its south entrance. The four buyers stood silently just inside the shed entrance. Also present were the refuge manager and personnel who stood by a large platform scale for weighing the rice. Most of the female harvesters remained outside this circle, conversing among themselves near the parked cars and bagged rice, and taking little noticeable interest in the auction proceedings.

Without any visible signal to start the bidding, an older male harvester entered the arena and began eliciting of-

fers from the buyers on behalf of the Indians. This man plays the role of the "auctioneer" each year. He obviously enjoys the position, and he is quite a comedian, giving a spirited performance to draw considerable response from the ricers, especially when the buyers become targets for his sarcasm. Significantly, the auctioneer is a former local Indian (with a wife from the Sandy Lake band) who has resided and worked in the Twin Cities for years. It is likely that his geographical-social distance from the local community, in addition to his forensic skills, makes him a suitable candidate for the role of business intermediary. As a harvester himself, however, the auctioneer has a vested interest in the outcome of the bidding. The local Indians possibly consider the man to be more attuned to white financial logic as a result of his greater contact with urban life. To what extent his outside experiences contribute to bargaining success is hard to judge.

Within a few minutes the auctioneer had one buyer (Buyer A) pressed to \$1.15 per pound with an incessant, driving banter:

I got \$1.15, fifteen, fifteen, fifteen, fifteen . . . I want sixteen . . . who'll give sixteen?

Responding to the pitch, Buyer A (the only white respondent thus far) accelerated from \$1.15 to \$1.18 per pound in short order. At this point, an obviously angered Buyer B (a rotund, sharp-voiced man) escorted Buyer A behind a pick-up truck where he thought they would be out of hearing range. Irritated by the quick rise in prices, Buyer B accused Buyer A of ruining the sale by competing with the buyers instead of with the Indians "who rightfully should be paid no more than \$1.00 a pound," according to B. The Indians were amused by this interruption, and the auctioneer hoped to gain by the turn of events. It should be noted here that throughout the sale the auctioneer kept in periodic communication with members of the local ricing committee, who advised on selling strategies. Theoretically, the committee agrees on a final selling price which is merely confirmed by the auctioneer.

When the bickering buyers returned to the shed entrance, Buyer A faded into the background and Buyer B assumed control. He immediately attacked the auctioneer for his unreasonable price demands and then threatened a "final" offer of \$1.16 per pound. Confident of the buyers capacity to go higher, the auctioneer flatly rejected the offer, pointing out that Perch Lake (Fond du Lac reservation — 40 miles to the east) harvesters had received \$1.21 per pound earlier that day. He further noted that the Rice Lake harvesters had received \$2.55 per pound in the rice-shortage year of 1966, to which Buyer B replied: "Don't remind me!"

Eventually the auctioneer succeeded in raising the bid, but Buyer B had developed a knack for irritating the harvesters. His \$1.18 per pound offer was stated more as an ultimatum: "Either take my price or take your rice home tonight and sell it on the road for a buck a pound." The buyer's harsh, oppressive nature caused general indignation, and several male harvesters argued back. One man noted the great price disparity between finished and raw

rice — thereby indicating that jobbers could easily afford to pay harvesters more. This criticism might have developed into a prolonged argument. However, certain harvesters evidently were bothered by the prospect of not concluding a transaction, and after consulting with committee members, the auctioneer sold the day's harvest to Buyer B for \$1.18 per pound.

Harvesters were noticeably relieved to consummate the sale. It meant receiving a substantial check as well as being able to go home after a long, tiring day. The circle of male harvesters dispersed and canoe party members stood in line by their respective rice bags to await weighing by the refuge manager and distribution of checks by the buyer. There was now more joking and light-hearted banter than during the auction proper. Some harvesters expressed the opinion that \$1.18 per pound was a good price for the first day of the season, indicating they expected the daily price would increase from this base. Others noted that the harvest itself was below average in yield compared with previous years. For example, the largest canoe party check of the day was about \$406.00 against a \$1,000.00 check in the 1968 harvest.

### **Assessment of Attitudes**

It is apparent that a prevailing attitude of Indians in the auction setting is that buyers, processors, and retail distributors (part of a diffuse white society) provide minimal financial compensation for a rare commodity which is outrageously inflated in cost for public consumption. Arguments were never violent, but the atmosphere of joking and friendly competition during the bidding may be a superficial facade or device intended to protect the economic interests of both harvesters and buyers. This view is supported by the fact that more prolonged arguments continued between scattered harvesters and buyers after the final sale was assured. For example, Buyer B defended retail sale prices for wild rice as a result of high processing costs. In turn, a harvester complained about the detrimental competition from "paddy"-produced rice (Oelke and Brun, 1969) which he considered inferior to naturally grown rice:

"You can't call that wild rice . . . yet they give the same price for that cheap stuff as for our wild rice."

In answer to this, Buyer A gave token recognition of the inequality of the two types (thereby implying that the naturally produced rice was better), but immediately after threw out two darts of discomfort:

1. Minnesota buyers and processors, in general, make no distinction between natural and paddy rice.
2. Indians are encouraging the production of paddy rice by growing it themselves (reputedly at Nett Lake).

The second point transferred the blame to the initiator of the exchange, and the debate was silenced.

While the September 9 auction retained an identical format to that of the first day, there was considerably less interest in arguing (probably partly due to the absence of the vociferous Buyer B) and a general urge to get the bidding done quickly. The first day of the season is ob-

viously a more crucial contest as it establishes the reference price from which further advances or declines are made.

Further observations are needed to show to what extent a "rice auction" can become an arena for expressing political attitudes. In view of diverging positions over recent resource legislation, it seems logical that the auction would become one clearing house of opinion.

#### Directions for further study

This brief analysis of current wild rice harvesting activity only suggests some of the possible social and political controls which local Ojibwa Indians impress upon their changing economy. Further investigation might consider the role of "ricing leaders" as foci of decision-making within local harvesting groups. Although there was not an officially elected leader of this type at Rice Lake at the time of this study, there was an informal leader — an old, highly respected East Lake man who was also a local "chief," and a prominent figure in the Chippewa Tribal Council. He appeared to be the prime organizer of harvesting activities as attested by his finesse at spatially coordinating flotillas of canoes in the water. Furthermore, it is probably the case that much of a ricing leader's power is wielded within the ricing committee — the body which, in consultation with refuge officials, determines gathering dates, hours and canoe limits.

A more precise definition of the role of ricing leaders, as well as non-traditional figures such as rice auctioneers, should clarify the decision-making processes underlying the trend toward increasingly restricted access to wild rice at Rice Lake and similar areas where there is careful guarding of a local resource for the benefit of a select few.

Persistence of traditional modes of camp life until quite recently and continued uses of traditional forms of leadership at Rice Lake stand alongside a growing participation in the cash economy of the white-dominated wild rice industry. Although the traditionally accepted historical boundaries for the exploitation of wild rice have been disputed, the critical factor of long term Indian-white interdependence in this realm was recognized early (Jenks, 1901).

Besides the Indians in the wild-rice district, there were for many years hundreds, perhaps thousands, of white men engaged in the fur trade, who subsisted largely on Indian natural production.

Any consideration of "aboriginal" patterns in the utilization of wild rice will have to come to grips with this symbiosis. It is especially crucial to contemporary Ojibwa

culture, a part which involves a pattern of political jockeying for scarce resources.

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