Ojibwe Americans and the Great Depression: The Impact of the “Indian New Deal” on Ojibwe Rice Harvesting

When Americans reflect on the Great Depression in the United States, they may recall a time when government officials teamed with Indian groups to confront Indian impoverishment and when work relief programs stemmed from a general incentive to restore Indian confidence in the federal administration. The program to construct wild rice campgrounds, for example, marked notable federal-Ojibwe collaboration. For Ojibwe men, moreover, the subsidy for traditional subsistence labour, such as rice harvesting, represented radical and progressive change. Yet it is important to understand that when President Franklin D. Roosevelt elevated Indian poverty relief as a priority of his economic agenda, government agencies nevertheless set out to subvert Ojibwe control of the wild rice economy, to exploit the “un-used” crop for the benefit of white society, and to reshape ricing labour practices according to Euro-American gender conceptions. It is thus imperative to understand the federal restructuring of the wild rice business in Minnesota and Wisconsin under Roosevelt’s administration within the context of an age-old American policy of the “civilizing” of Indians as well as a “New Deal” desire to address the problem of Indian poverty.

Who are the Ojibwe?

The Ojibwe are a North American Indian people of the Algonquian language family whose culture was deeply shaken by the changes made to the wild rice economy during the 1930s. The ancestors of the Ojibwe lived originally on the Atlantic Coast and near the St. Lawrence River. Tribal warfare and a prophecy of prosperity in rice harvesting in the west prompted a gradual emigration to Sault Ste. Marie by the time French explorers were landing up the St. Lawrence basin at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Over the next two centuries, the Ojibwe would emerge as the principal tribal economic and military power in the Great Lakes
region. During the fur-trade era, they occupied the valuable role of middleman between the Dakota and the French. Even when beset by epidemics, the Ojibwe managed to strengthen their population, raise their standard of living, and consolidate political and territorial power by the end of the eighteenth century. This transformation accompanied their final settlement in what is now Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Ontario, and Quebec.¹

**Allotment Era (1887-1934):**

The Allotment Era refers to the period of time between two critical federal American legislations: the Dawes Act of 1887 and the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934. Starting in 1887 and until 1934, the federal government officially pursued an assimilationist agenda, which involved “Americanizing” Indians through the disintegration of tribal landholdings into individual allotments of private property. This second act, the IRA, marked the government’s official rescission of the Dawes Act and supposed rejection of Indian “civilization” policies in favour of reinstituting “self-government” on Indian reservations. In 1928, the famous Meriam Report exposed some of the catastrophic consequences of the allotment process to governing officials and to the American population. By the early 1930s, Indian advocates such as John Collier (1884-1968)—Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner in 1933—brought Roosevelt damming details of the repercussions of estranging Indians from 139 million acres of land and the destruction of tribal bonds.² Evidence of the undeserved suffering of American Indians surfaced increasingly during Roosevelt’s first years as President, including the discovery that the Spanish influenza of 1918-1919 plagued the largely displaced American Indian population by an amount four times higher than that of the nation’s largest urban populations.³ This instance of singular Indian adversity was directly linked to the previous governments’ splintering of Indian Territory,

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³ Crosby, Alfred. *America’s Forgotten Pandemic*, 228.
which resulted in overcrowding on allotments, on reservations, and at Indian boarding schools. Indian vulnerability to epidemics, moreover, was worsened by the inadequacy of health care given them by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. As more evidence accumulated highlighting the plight of Indians, reformers such as Collier lobbied to revise federal Indian legislation. Once in charge of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Collier immediately attempted to overthrow the policies of “Americanization” and Allotment of the previous federal governments. Collier launched his Indian reformation campaign with the successful passage of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934.

Environmental Degradation and Challenges to Usufructuary Rights during the Allotment Era:

Ojibwe communities encountered tremendous difficulty harvesting wild rice during the Allotment Era. At the outset, Allotment robbed reservations of huge tracts of land. In northwestern Minnesota, for instance, White Earth Reservation had shrunk by 92 percent of its original size by the 1930s. Allotment was also a time when the rise of timber companies wreaked havoc on territory previously occupied by the Ojibwe. The Northern States Power Company disturbed water levels in rivers in northern Wisconsin throughout the 1920s by building dams to float logs downstream to the mill. These changes in the water table drowned the rice stands on Lac View Desert and eventually flooded the villages, forcing the resettlement of Ojibwe from Old Post to New Post. The influx of non-natives to the rice district was similarly

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4 Danziger acknowledges the “inadequate facilities” of the BIA as partly responsible for the poor recovery of Indians from communicable diseases. Still, he relies on the BIA’s reports from 1910 to attribute part responsibility to the Indians themselves: “Intemperate, roving native bands—seemingly irresponsible on their refusal to be vaccinated, isolated, or doctor—also contributed to the dismal state of Indian health.” Please see page 120 in The Chippewas of Lake Superior.


6 Please refer to Figures 1 and 2 for Minnesota and Wisconsin reservation map locations. Vennum, Thomas Jr. Wild Rice and the Ojibway People, 268.

7 Vennum, Thomas Jr. Wild Rice and the Ojibway, 290.
disastrous. The Lac Court Oreilles Ojibwe harvested rice on Lake Pakweiwong in Wisconsin until local residents began attacking wild rice stands, clearing the lakes of the crop, to discourage Indians from returning to harvest. In 1920, Ojibwe William Baker grumbled about white property owners on his reservation who required Indians to pay with rice in order to harvest on the lakes: “You couldn’t even go in there unless you gave them some rice…I suppose half. I never did, I give them nothing.”8 Lastly, after 1890, Minnesota and Wisconsin increasingly imposed trespassing laws on the Ojibwe who exercised their right to roam the land. State authorities used Section 6 of the Dawes Act to prohibit the Ojibwe from ricing beyond reservation boundaries. Section 6 stated that Indians who agreed to the 1887 Dawes Act were liable to the civil and criminal laws of the state or territory in which they lived.9 In enforcing trespassing laws against the Ojibwe, authorities effectively reinterpreted the 1842 La Pointe Treaty. This treaty granted Ojibwe “the right of hunting on the ceded territory, with the other usual privileges of occupancy.”10 Although this referenced the Ojibwe right to make use of the land, as agreed upon in 1842, the vague and deceitful wording by government officials doomed Ojibwe communities to situations wherein authorities could interpret the legislation as they saw fit. The issue of license to make use of off-reservation rice lakes continues to harass the Ojibwe, such as Everett Keezer and James Kier in 1980. Their attempt to harvest rice on Minnesota state waters in Anoka County resulted in their arrest, incarceration, and conviction of trespassing.11

In the terms and conditions of most treaties, ricing rights were only implied, not explicitly mentioned. Nevertheless, Ojibwe elders made it clear during negotiations that access to

8 Quoted in Vennum, Thomas Jr. Wild Rice and the Ojibway, 262.
9 All reservations in Minnesota and Wisconsin accepted the Dawes Act except the Red Lake Reservation in northern Wisconsin. This refusal to accept allotment exempted Red Lake from federal and state jurisdiction (Ibid., 270).
10 Norrgard, Chantal. “From Berries to Orchards, 45; see Vennum, Thomas Jr. Wild Rice and the Ojibway People, 257-258 for 1842 Treaty quote.
11Vennum, Thomas Jr. Wild Rice and the Ojibway People, 292.
wild rice stands as well as other resources was vital to Indian survival. In the St. Peter’s Treaty negotiations of 1837, Ojibwe elder Flat Mouth distinctly expressed usufructuary rights as a priority: “Your children\textsuperscript{12} are willing to let you have their lands, but they wish to reserve the privilege of…getting their living from the Lakes and Rivers.” The Ojibwe understand “getting their living from the Lakes and Rivers” to imply wild rice harvesting as well as fishing.\textsuperscript{13} “[Y]ou may cut down the Trees,” he conceded, but “[t]here is some game on the lands” and “for that reason also, we wish to remain on them, to get a living.”\textsuperscript{14} Had the Ojibwe relinquished their ricing rights, Thomas Vennum Jr. argues, compensation for this concession would surely have been indicated in the treaties.\textsuperscript{15} Some reservations boundaries, such as White Earth and Leech Lake in Minnesota and Bad River in Wisconsin, encompassed valuable ricing areas. Others, however, did not, such as Minnesota reservation Fond du Lac. This was not an issue for Fond du Lac Ojibwe until their right to access off-reservation resources was disputed. This would not have been an issue in the long run, moreover, had treaty terms plainly reflected what had been negotiated. 

The federal government intervened occasionally during the Allotment Era to legally ensure Ojibwe access to their rice stands. In 1926, Congress realized the toll that a land reduction of 92 percent had taken on White Earth Reservation. Congress enacted Public Law No. 418, which reserved Rice Lake and adjoining lands as exclusive grounds for Ojibwe rice harvesting. By 1934, game populations increased due to the abundance of rice. The state of Minnesota thus commenced condemnation hearings of Public Law No. 418 to obtain ownership of the land and convert the area into a public hunting ground. In the spirit of the “Indian New Deal,” Congress

\textsuperscript{12} It is important to note that when Native Americans addressed Europeans and Euro-Americans as “father,” they were showing respect, not deference or submission.

\textsuperscript{13} Norrgard’s “From Berries to Orchards.”

\textsuperscript{14} Quoted in Norrgard, Chantal. “From Berries to Orchards,” 39.

\textsuperscript{15} Vennum, Thomas Jr. \textit{Wild Rice and the Ojibway}, 261.
reaffirmed its protection of the Wild Rice Lake Indian Reserve in 1935. The cost of implementing this protection, however, came out of Ojibwe trust funds in the federal treasury.\textsuperscript{16}

Congress expressed interest in protecting Ojibwe access to rice beds after the reputation of wild rice as a profitable crop had spread and after increasing white incursions into the business threatened to devastate the harvest. Until whites demonstrated their capacity to drown or exhaust rice stands, government officials perceived traditional cultivation methods as unproductive and wasteful. In 1898, for example, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources criticized Indian harvest methods as “inefficient.” The DNR did not understand why the Ojibwe, in beating the grain off of the rice stems, allowed some of the seeds to be knocked into the water. The Ojibwe, of course, had been doing this since time immemorial to ensure the crop’s replenishment each year.\textsuperscript{17} Around this same time, a government farmer was similarly frustrated with the Ojibwe “underproduction” of wild rice. He judged the negligence to gather each last grain a symptom of Indian idleness: “Much rice could be gathered in a good season if the Indians could be induced to work.”\textsuperscript{18}

The 1920s and 1930s introduced new machines for rice production as amateur white harvesters sought to modernize the rice business. The harvesting machine, for example, which propelled revolving arms into rice stems, impressively caught 90 percent of the grain. Such attempts to correct Indian “under-production” effectively robbed rice lakes of seed required to replenish the crop.\textsuperscript{19} Other mechanical rice pickers barreled through rice fields, decapitating and uprooting other plants at water level.\textsuperscript{20} Later models of these pickers, which were less

\textsuperscript{16} Vennum, Thomas Jr. \textit{Wild Rice and the Ojibway People}, 263.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 267-268.
\textsuperscript{18} Quoted in Vennum, Thomas Jr. \textit{Wild Rice and the Ojibway}, 267.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 225.
\textsuperscript{20} These pickers were banned in Minnesota with the 1939 legislation (Vennum, Thomas Jr. \textit{Wild Rice and the Ojibway People}, 226).
ecologically damaging, could collect in thirty minutes what an Indian could collect in a day. Once white harvesters started to build their own processing devices, they took control of the rice market. Mechanization further encouraged greater numbers of non-natives to enter the business as well.\textsuperscript{21} The excessive harvesting methods of white ricers compelled Minnesota and Wisconsin in the 1930s and 1940s to enact rice protective laws to minimize the damage. The Minnesota Department of Conservation successfully lobbied for the passage of wild rice protection legislature in 1931. The act outlawed damage to wild rice plants in public waters by powerboats, for example, which polluted and disrupted the waters of or around rice lakes. The sale or purchase of unripe rice was also prohibited as injurious to the crop.\textsuperscript{22} Wisconsin enacted similar restrictions against boats and ricing techniques, but not until the end of World War Two.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{The “Indian Problem” and New Deal Support of the Wild Rice Economy:}

The economic collapse of 1929 worsened the situation for American Indians, who already faced the crises of poverty, disease, and diaspora. In 1933, Roosevelt authorized the start of work relief programs near Great Lakes reservations to alleviate Indian impoverishment. By 1939, 25 percent of tribal members from most reservations in Minnesota and some in Wisconsin had received some form of wage employment through the Works Program Administration (WPA), through Indian Emergency Conservation Work (IECW), or through the Indian Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC-ID).\textsuperscript{24} Relief work generally involved forest management, soil conservation, and park development, reflecting the federal government’s conservation policies of the time. When Ojibwe men abandoned their job posts in late summer

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 227.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 268.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 278.
\textsuperscript{24} Minnesota reservations included: Red Lake, White Earth, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, Fond du Lac, Lake Vermilion, Grand Portage, and Bois Forte. Wisconsin reservations included: Lac du Flambeau and Lac Court Oreilles (Sommer, Barbara W. \textit{Hard Work and A Good Deal,} 7).
without warning to return to reservations to build rice camps for the harvest, camp supervisors
were naturally frustrated. They soon, however, perceived an untapped opportunity for profit.\textsuperscript{25}
Through other conservation projects, furthermore, camp administrators came to learn about the
destruction done to rice stands during the previous decades and advocated harvesting the crop as
a way to revive the depressed Ojibwe economy.\textsuperscript{26} The improvement and renovation of wild rice
cultivation subsequently became a new theme of work relief programs in Minnesota and
Wisconsin. The open-air and labour intensive nature of the work, moreover, aligned with
Roosevelt’s platform of natural conservation and work relief. Whereas Nett Lake employees near
the Bois Forte Reservation in northern Minnesota built lookout towers and telephone lines to
protect against forest fires in 1933, they built dams to regulate water levels and enhance wild rice
production in 1936.\textsuperscript{27}

White Earth Reservation was another obvious target of the CCC-ID for rice rejuvenation.
Employees cleared fifty acres of land and built dams, docks, and canals to control water flow and
assist canoe maneuvering. The site was also furnished with sanitary facilities to improve health
risks. Brenda J. Child comments in \textit{Holding Our World Together} that such attempts by the
government to bolster the wild rice economy must have seemed hypocritical to White Earth
Ojibwe who had experienced the decade before: “Anyone remotely familiar with the recent
history would have understood the terrible devastation to the wild rice economy that had recently
taken place in Minnesota and Wisconsin.”\textsuperscript{28} The federal government, she points out, “that had
for almost a century privileged the timber industry and agriculture over Ojibwe interests to the
point of devastating the wild rice environment, and had forced an allotment policy that piece-by-

\textsuperscript{25} Child, Brenda J. \textit{Holding Our World Together}, 111.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 112-113.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 114.
piece undermined Indian land-ownership, now ‘realized the importance of wild rice to the Indians.’” Indeed, overnight, government officials endorsed an Indian enterprise it had spent the previous fifty years sabotaging.

Despite government attempts to promote traditional rice harvesting, abuse against the crop persisted throughout the 1930s in Minnesota and Wisconsin. By the late 1930s, Ojibwe communities distinguished white rice harvesting as a danger to their subsistence activity. Indian advocate Harry Ayer, for instance, frequently had to report to state officials accounts of immature rice harvesting on old Indian territory near the Mille Lacs Reservation in north-central Minnesota. William Morrell, from Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota, complained about white harvesters who would “come in before the rice ripens” and “cut the heads off, off from the stalk of the rice and then it doesn’t reseed itself.” “I told the conservation department,” he warned, “If you keep this practice in 15 years time, I said, we won’t have no rice in the state of Minnesota.”

Commercial harvesting by non-natives had depleted rice stalks to such an extent that Ayer and others persuaded the Minnesota legislature to pass further rice protection laws. The most transformative wild rice legislation in Minnesota history at that point was passed in 1939. Chapter 231 of this act declared rice protection “an emergency,” banned machine harvesting on state waters and selling unripe grain, and required that ricing equipment adhere to Ojibwe standards. The act acknowledged wild rice as vital to Indian survival, but neglected to bolster this claim with reference to treaty rights. Finally, the act stated that the new structure of

32 Ibid., 269-270.
the wild rice business, implemented and enforced through wardens, was to be funded by yearly license fees required of all harvesters and buyers.33

While the Ojibwe appreciated the new constraints imposed on white harvesters, they resented the new legislation controls against them. The Ojibwe condemned the Commissioner and his wardens, who presided over the system but who knew nothing about traditional riceing. The Ojibwe opposed the fee as well, which, although affordable,34 represented to them the state’s shameless appropriation of a staple of the Indian diet. Thus, many Ojibwe flouted the licensing requirement and repeatedly wound up in conflicts with local wardens. For the Ojibwe, the most upsetting aspect of the license requirement was its official endorsement of commercial harvesting through encouraging non-natives to harvest rice by paying a modest fee. By 1940, the state issued 993 licenses to Ojibwe harvesters and 1,521 to white harvesters.35 By 1970 only 25 percent of those harvesting were Indian. This legislation thus turned a profit for the state of Minnesota without repairing riceing conditions for Ojibwe people. White participation in rice harvesting signified heightened competition for a deteriorating Ojibwe resource.36

**Social Implications of State Involvement in Ojibwe Wild Rice Economy:**

Increased non-native settlement on rice lands and the replacement of traditional harvesting methods with commercial practices had major social implications on Ojibwe culture. When missionaries Lucy M. Lewis and William Lewis visited Leech Lake in 1844, they described the women as “perfect slaves to the men” and “capable of enduring the greatest labor.” “They cut all the wood and carry it to the lodge on their backs,” they described, “do the fishing

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34 In 1939, the fee was one dollar for ricers and 5 dollars for buyers (Ibid., 272).
35 By law, Ojibwe families could share a single license while white harvesters had to purchase individual permits. Thus, the number 993 does not likely reflect the number of Ojibwe harvesting in Minnesota in 1940. The number 1,521, however, also does not reflect the number of whites who harvested illegally at this time. Nonetheless, these figures provide some insight into the booming interest in rice harvesting by the non-native community (Ibid., 272).
36 Ibid., 271-272.
make the sugar gather the rice cultivate the corn & potatoes, everything that is called labor and the men do nothing at all." 37 Before the Great Depression, rice harvesting and production had been the exclusive occupation of Ojibwe, Menominee, and Dakota women of the Great Lakes region. Through the allotment era, collectives of women sewed, bound, harvested, gathered, and distributed wild rice to the community. 38 The only role men played in the production process was to build the camps that would house the extend family during the harvest. Women exercised total control of this production process, including how much rice was distributed and to whom. Anthropologist Albert Jenks, who worked in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and along the Canadian border, took note in the early 1900s of the unusual legal and ecological directorship exercised by Ojibwe women over the wild rice economy. 39

Ojibwe men became involved in increasing stages of rice production in the 1930s with commercialization. The transition in the gendered division of labour was first marked by the appearance of husband and wife, ricing in pairs—the husband paddling the canoe and the wife knocking the rice into the boat. Gradually, however, two-man crews became the norm. Reflecting on this transformation as having begun during the Great Depression, James Mustache said: “Never see any women now.” 40 Those oblivious to Indian culture, such as Lucy M. Lewis and William Lewis or U.S. government officials, perceived the role of women in the Ojibwe rice harvest according to Euro-American notions of gender and labour. Federal distribution of work relief through the WPA and the CCC-ID helped reinvent the wild rice economy as male-centric. Work relief was provided primarily to Ojibwe men, emphasized masculinity, and was supervised by male authorities. In many cases during the Depression, poverty forced single mothers to

abandon the reservation and move to urban centres where they stood a better chance finding work. After the Depression, the Ojibwe gradually came to perceive the labour as gender neutral. By World War Two, however, men dominated the rice production process in the Great Lakes area and female collectives were brought to an end.41

Ousting Ojibwe women from the harvesting process indicated one way in which white involvement transformed the legal framework of rice production and distribution. For centuries, “ownership” of the rice fields had been communal. This was a time when rice grew in plentiful amounts. Women of each family were free to harvest as they pleased to either consume or to sell in addition to contributing to a communal rice fund. This reserve ensured that relief was provided to families who could not harvest for reasons extending from crop failure to disease to alcoholism.42 The Ojibwe observed these time-honoured laws, which were moored in traditional notions of land use and community, until they clashed with those of the American government. Sustainability was a cardinal rule of the legal system regulating rice production. During and after the Great Depression, however, Ojibwe ricers confronted the relentless pressure to balance ecological needs with satisfying the ruling society’s demand for increased productivity. The management of “Indian New Deal” rice camps revealed the genuine concerns of the federal government: rather than uplift the Ojibwe from poverty, officials spotted an opportunity to exploit rice harvesting. Like the governments before Roosevelt, this was accomplished underhandedly through legislation that set a hidden agenda in motion.

The Impact of the New Deal on Ojibwe Wild Rice Harvesting:

Both Brenda Child and Thomas Vennum Jr. argue that what might have begun as an attempt by the federal government to alleviate Indian poverty quickly and classically devolved into colonial exploitation of indigenous people and resources.\textsuperscript{43} Ironically, the 1939 legislation that was purportedly advantageous to Indian communities was almost immediately rejected by the Ojibwe. Generally, the Ojibwe perceived the state as having simply appropriated the traditional Ojibwe system. The commissioner was ignorant of wild rice traditions and administered from St. Paul. Ojibwe resistance against the license regulation furthermore demonstrated how this legislation criminalized Ojibwe participation in the wild rice economy rather than empowered the state to regulate Ojibwe usufructuary rights.

The era of the “Indian New Deal” not only saw the business of wild ricing changed; the traditional role of wild rice in Ojibwe culture was also transformed. Harvesters today in the Great Lakes area labour according to time restraints and struggle to collect each grain of rice. This mindset starkly contrasts the social and festive atmosphere that rice harvesters once looked forward to when the season approached. Tribal elders reflect on the traditional economy with nostalgia, when conservation harvesting prevailed over financial gain: “When the lake used to be really filled with rice,” one elder recalled, “[p]eople would be singing, laughing, or telling stories.”\textsuperscript{44} Minnesota Ojibwe Paul Buffalo (1900-1977) complained that since the commercialization of rice, harvesters were forgetting the principles underpinning the tradition in their narrow-minded pursuit of profit: “We want to leave some [rice] so it will germinate for the next year,” while “[t]he generation nowadays never figures far enough ahead.”\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{43} Child, Brenda J. \textit{Holding Our World Together}, 114-115; Vennum, 293.
\textsuperscript{44} Vennum, Thomas Jr. \textit{Wild Rice and the Ojibway People}, 296.
\textsuperscript{45} Quoted in Vennum, Thomas Jr. \textit{Wild Rice and the Ojibway People}, 296-297.
The “modernization” of Ojibwe rice harvesting thus directly and immediately impacted Ojibwe culture: once the harvest was commercialized, the harvesters began to think in commercial terms. This evidence does not easily correspond with the policies of a government interested in Indian political independence. Indeed, the policies of previous governments, adamant about Indian assimilation, arose from the theory that so long as the Indian practiced his culture’s traditions, he could not be assimilated into American society. The successful initiative by government officials to police and Americanize the traditional practice of rice harvesting, therefore, cannot demarcate the Great Depression or Roosevelt’s “New Deal” as a time when the federal government replaced misguided Indian “civilization” policies with progressive ambitions for Indian empowerment. Rather, the history of the Ojibwe during the 1930s reveals a struggle to sustain the traditions embedded in rice harvesting against the laws and customs of white society.

An important chapter in recent American Indian history is the account of how the ills of the Great Depression proliferated in Ojibwe communities. This new, gratuitous poverty descended onto tribal communities that had been exploited by previous federal administrations for land and resources. During the 1930s, Roosevelt’s “Indian New Deal” campaign directed attention towards the idea of Indian “self-government” and away from its policies, which hardly deviated from the allotment and assimilation policies of past years. The Indian Reorganization Act and John Collier’s reform program have clouded important consideration of how the economic collapse uniquely implicated Indian communities. In Minnesota and Wisconsin, state and federal officials imposed the laws of American society on Ojibwe communities, usurping Indian control of the rice economy, altering the gendered division of labour, and dislodging the role of tradition in the production process. Although many Ojibwe continue to combat these
forces, by not relying on machines at each step of the process, for example, others cannot
disassociate wild rice harvesting from its commercial desecration, which began in the 1930s.

**Figure 1:** Minnesota Reservation

**Figure 2:** Wisconsin Reservations
Bibliography


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