



Community Kitchens and an Intertribal Processing and Preserving Network: Space and Sharing to Revive Menominee Food Practices

The **Kemāmaceqtaq** (“We’re all moving”) team aims to create community spaces that support the revival of Menominee traditional food practices. As documented through a community survey in August 2020, community members have had a longstanding interest in the processing and preserving of Menominee fruits, vegetables, wild rice, game and fish, and in accessing space and learning opportunities to regain these skills. After completing a scan of community assets for food processing and engaging with local partners, the Kemāmaceqtaq team is working to establish a community kitchen with freely available equipment for members of the Menominee community to use. Towards this same goal, the Kemāmaceqtaq team has also developed and facilitated the Intertribal Processing and Preserving Network, to bring together leaders from across tribal communities in the region to share knowledge about processing and preserving and learn together. This overall effort will strengthen connections to traditional Menominee foods, revitalize cultural ways harmed by colonial legacies, and further support the physical health and holistic well-being of Menominee community members.

Public Health Challenge

Menominee County is home to the Menominee Indian Reservation, the largest reservation east of the Mississippi. Despite the tribe’s rich food traditions and histories involving fish, berries, wild rice, and game, many tribal members face difficulties in acquiring these foods and even more difficulties in accessing equipped spaces to process and preserve these foods. To renew and revive these traditional foodways, Menominee community members are seeking spaces, resources, and learning opportunities to process and preserve their food.

Approach

While interest in community spaces, resources, and education for the processing and preserving of traditional Menominee foods has been long standing, the Kemāmaceqtaq team joined local partners in 2020 to



move these interests forward towards their realization. Partners reviewed assessments previously conducted in the community and came together to develop coordinated plans towards a fully equipped, accessible community kitchen and educational opportunity to support its use.

Building from the gap analysis of agriculture resources by the Menominee Nation Department of Agriculture and Food Systems in 2019, partners identified the old community recreation center as an ideal space for a community kitchen. In a survey assisted by the Kemāmaceqtaq team, community members had shared their visions for the kitchen space, including for equipment for processing and preserving, as well as preparing food for large gatherings and potential food businesses. This equipment will be available to all community members to use at the kitchen or for check-out. Community members also wanted the kitchen to be a good place for cooking demonstrations and for learning food techniques together. In the future, a storefront may be added to the kitchen to support food entrepreneurs in selling their products.

As the community kitchen has been planned and developed, the Intertribal Processing and Preserving Network has been growing with the goals of promoting and increasing access to traditional foods in tribal communities. This network was launched by the Kemāmaceqtaq team in 2019 and consists of representatives from Menominee County/Nation Division

of Extension and tribal nations throughout the state of Wisconsin. Meeting primarily online, more than 80 participants from 6 tribal nations in Wisconsin have come together to discuss topics like safe food handling, preserving venison, and a virtual tour of Oneida Cannery. Members of the Kemānceqtaq team also participated in a virtual train-the-trainer series with preservation experts from Michigan State University and are sharing this learning with the network and locally. Participants in the network have worked to collect and make accessible recipes, sourcing information, and other resources for processing and preserving within tribal communities.

When the community kitchen is completed, members of the Menominee Nation will have space, equipment, and access to workshops to practice skills in processing and preserving local and traditional foods. Through ongoing participation in the Intertribal Processing and Preserving Network, Menominee community members engage with other tribal communities in the sharing of knowledge and resources to sustain processing and preserving practices. Together these efforts support traditional foodways, healthy eating, and the community's physical and overall well-being, and advance food sovereignty.

Results

Community members have expressed excitement for the kitchen, including its learning spaces and potential storefront, and the various equipment they will have access to for food processing and preservation. The community kitchen is expected to open to the public in 2023.



In a recent survey, participants in the Intertribal Processing and Preserving Network reported that they found the sessions to be useful, including 50% who found them to be “very useful.” Among the ways that participants have applied their new learning, most reported that they have made improvements to their ongoing local food efforts and shared learning with others. Participants want to keep the network going and have identified other communities to involve and new topics to explore.

The success of this project was reliant upon the ongoing relationship between the Kemānceqtaq project team, the Menominee Nation, and other tribal communities participating in the Intertribal Processing and Preserving Network. Each partner adds valuable perspectives and

resources that advance shared goals for community health and well-being, connectedness within and beyond the Menominee Nation, and for food sovereignty.

Sustaining Success

The Kemānceqtaq project and Menominee County/Nation Division of Extension will continue to support the community kitchen by maintaining and updating equipment, providing ongoing training opportunities and classes, and informing community members of new opportunities to utilize the space. Menominee County/Nation Division of Extension will continue to convene and facilitate meetings of the Intertribal Processing and Preserving Network and maintain access to gathered recipes and other resources.

Quote

“We felt it was very important to network with other tribes and find out what is happening around food. We felt that the knowledge that we gain through this networking could help us to develop programming that can help to increase access to healthier and more Indigenous foods year round.”

-Dawn Doperalski, Extension Health & Well-Being Educator and Kemānceqtaq team member

For more information, visit:

The Kemānceqtaq project webpage:

<https://menominee.extension.wisc.edu/kemamaceqtaq-were-all-moving/>

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Contact Information

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Recipient: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension

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Story author name and email: Dawn Doperalski – dawn.doperalski@wisc.edu