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‘Brittany Luby, Margaret Lehman, Andrea Bradford, Samantha Mehltretter, and Jane Mariotti with Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation (Editors), *Manomin: Caring for Ecosystems and Each Other*’

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Brittany Luby, Margaret Lehman, Jane Mariotti, Samantha Mehltretter, and Andrea Bradford with Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation (Editors), *Manomin: Caring for Ecosystems and Each Other* (University of Manitoba Press, 2024), 226pp. Paperback. C\$29.95. ISBN: 978-1-7728-4090-2.

Manomin: Caring for Ecosystems and Each Other, an edited collection by Brittany Luby, Margaret Lehman, Jane Mariotti, Samantha Mehltretter, and Andrea Bradford with Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation, is not only a book that introduces the reader to the scientific, historic, cultural, and contemporary importance of Manomin¹ but is also, as Winona LaDuke specifies: ‘...a blessing of teachings.’ As specified by the editors, this collection ‘has been written with the hope of deepening [the reader’s] understanding of Manomin² and the sacred ecosystem that sustains life. “For ... Indigenous readers whose ancestors nurtured the Manomin spirit, we hope this book reminds you that every seed is a sign of ancestral care.”’ It is from this opening statement, as a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg-Inini that I approach a review of this edited collection.

Contributors to this edited collection not only include the editors but also individuals such as Edward Benton-Banai, Joseph Pitawanakwat, Jana-Rae Yerxa, Pikanagegaabo William Yerxa, and Shane Chartrand, to name but a few.³ Each contributor adds to the story and understanding of Manomin in a way that allows Indigenous and Non-Indigenous readers alike to easily follow along. The ‘Introduction’ and Chapters One, Two, and Three give Indigenous and Non-Indigenous understanding of the science, make up, importance and history of Manomin – especially in relation to the peoples who have utilized it since time immemorial. I found this section captivating as it situates this work with the territory many of the Indigenous contributors have historic and contemporary ties to but also, as Benton-Banai showcases, the importance of Manomin in relation to the migration story of the Anishinaabeg. Additionally, Kelly, Indian, Copenace and Kinew, in their section relating to ‘Manitoo Gitigaan, the Great Spirits Garden,’ explain that ‘Manoomin is with us in every ceremony as it is an esteemed gift that, once dried in processing, will not spoil [and that] understanding manoomin requires respect for the interrelationships of all the essential gifts of the creator’ (p. 17). Indeed, the knowledge holders highlighted show how everything is intertwined – from the bark of trees to make the canoes used to obtain the Manomin, to the steps and materials needed to assist in processing Manomin.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six add to how Manomin assists in education – whether as a teacher itself, to language, and to understanding sustainability, ecosystems, and environmental balance. Additionally, and of special interest to me as a Political Scientist is Chapter Eight, ‘Treaty and Mushkiki’ by Yerxa and Yerxa as they detail important components of treaty making – showing that diplomacy for Anishinaabeg, and other

¹ The editors and contributors to *Manomin* capitalize Manomin and explain in their section titled ‘A Note on Language’ as to why they do so. In honouring their explanation and Indigenous ways of thinking and knowing, I too will follow suit in this review.

² The term *Manomin*, in Anishinaabemowin, references what is called ‘Wild Rice’ in English. Additionally, the reader of this review will notice there is more than one version of spelling for the word – this is because of regional differences in spelling and writing within Anishinaabemowin dialects.

³ Other contributors in *Manomin* include: Kezhii’aanakwat Ron Kelly, Giizhiigokwe Sandra Indian, Patees Dorothy Copenance, Kathi Avery Kinew, Victoria Jackson, Sean Sherman, Michelle Johnson-Jennings, Hannah Neufeld, Kristi Leora Gansworth, and Jill McConkey.

Indigenous nations, extended to all living entities. In their chapter, Yerxa and Yerxa discuss the formation of treaty between Anishinaabeg and Manomin. Yerxa and Yerxa state that 'in our treaty with manoomin, we are to care for and respect manoomin which will ensure it grows in abundance. In return manoomin will care for the Anishinaabeg and be a plentiful source of nourishment for our bodies' (p. 142). This line struck me with its importance when I consider the work the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg are doing in what we refer to as Southern Ontario on most maps today – trying to protect and reintroduce Manomin to its rightful place in our waterways. This reestablishes and recommits us to our treaty with Manomin and highlights our commitment to protecting and caring for the territories of which we consider ourselves stewards.

How does it do this? As Yerxa and Yerxa point out: 'When we situate the relationship within an Anishinaabeg treaty framework, there is a re-emergence of Anishinaabe philosophy that recognizes the Anishinaabe perspective, [and] treaty is a living relationship. So, if you do not take care of it, how good is that relationship going to be? This is what our teachings tell us' (p. 142).

In turn, I recommend that those in fields of History, Law, Political Science, Indigenous Studies, and Environmental Science add this book to their 'to read' list, as well as anyone interested in understanding the importance of Manomin – and do not forget to try the recipes shared by Sean Sherman, Michelle Johnson-Jennings, and Shane Chartrand, you will not regret doing so.

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