

Ashi-niswi giizisoog (Thirteen Moons)

Onaabani Giizis

The new moon that occurs on March 15 is Onaabani giizis, or the "Hard crust on snow moon." The sap of the aninaatig begins to flow under this moon, also known as Ziinsibaakwadooke giizis, or the sugar coming out moon. Another name for this moon is Aandego-giizis (Crow moon).

Timber Cruising at Fond du Lac

By Nikki Crowe

Anne Dunn tells a story of how the Tamarack, mashkiigwaatig, lost her needles because she was vain, our old stories teach about responsibility and kindness being rewarded. In some ways our Fond du Lac foresters are rewarded for their responsibility and kindness when they go out timber cruising. Scott Grover (pictured at right) pinches himself to remind himself that cruising through the forest on cold winter days is a job. He says being out in the forest is more spiritual in the winter when everything is asleep.



Scott Grover

gobaandag, so that the snow lands right on my head. I usually put tobacco asemaa down in respect to those spirits and explain aloud who I am and why I am there. I love seeing all the different animal spirits too! Sometimes

I really concentrate on my hike to the plot and when I get there I realize I'm in the territory of a family of porcupines. The porcupines are way up in different trees staring at me, as if to say, "Who's this?" I laugh to myself and say to the porcupine "Boozhoo gaag! I'm just going to cruise timber and be outta here shortly!"

Ileana Henry tells me that FDL foresters go out timber cruising whenever they can, but the winter biboon months are nice because they are able to have some fun navigating to remote forested areas (often inaccessible in summer months) via horseless sled, better known as snowmobiles. In the winter they are able to see the trunks of the trees better because there are no leaves to

block your sight. Hiking from plot to plot with snowshoes on helps keep excess winter weight off and gets timber cruisers ready for fire season as well as the dreaded pack test.

Fond du Lac reservation has over 18,000 acres of forested tribal lands. The majority of this forested land is dominated by aspen due to past land use and/or disturbance patterns (like fires, floods, insect outbreaks, logging), our climate, and our soil type. We also have several thousand acres each of northern hardwoods (species like sugar maple, basswood, and yellow birch) and swamp conifers (black spruce, northern white cedar, or tamarack). According to Steve Olson, FDL Forester, the cruising Scott & Ileana do is for FDL's forest inventory which is used to determine sustainable harvest levels & where we might carry out management activities, like blueberry, miinan, restoration. For more info go to: <http://www.fdlrez.com/newnr/forestry/management.htm>

Mitigwech to Steve Olson, Ileana Henry and Scott Grover for their contributions to this article.

Photos credit: <http://www.fdlrez.com/newnr/forestry.htm>.

Birch Tapping

by David Wilsey

Last month we profiled several FDL sugarbushers. This month, we want to make sure that another local resource is not overlooked. Like aniinatig (maple), wiigwaas (birch) can be tapped for sap in the spring. Birch trees are tapped in the same way as maple. The birch-tapping season typically starts in April and continues until buds appear. To test readiness, break a small twig: if sap drips out of the break the tree is ready to tap.

Neither birch sap nor syrup is traditionally consumed in the Americas, yet millions of gallons are gathered in Europe and bottled as a natural drink. It contains important vitamins and minerals, like vitamin C, potassium, manganese, and calcium. In the Americas, most birch sapping is in Alaska and Canada. Birch sap is used to make candies, salad dressings, marinades, and any other products that can be "enhanced" with some birch syrup. (Nonalcoholic) birch beer is also produced in the US.

One notable difference between

the sap of aniinatig and wiigwaas is sugar concentration. Maple sap's sugar is typically around 2% or higher. Birch sap typically is around 1% sugar. Where it takes about 45 gallons of maple sap to produce 1 gallon of syrup (45:1), birch sap to syrup proportions are typically 100:1.

Another notable difference between the sap of aniinatig and wiigwaas is that maple's sugar is sucrose while birch's sugars are simple, glucose and fructose. For this reason, birch sugars (sap) melt at



Ileana Henry

lower temperatures and can caramelize, giving syrup a darker and stronger taste.

A final note: birch sap is also perishable and will only last a few days once drawn. However, sap can be frozen.

Sources: *Birch and birch bark - J. Zasada; Celebrating Birch North House Folk School*