

## Enrichment: Harvesting Giniginige/*Cansasa*

*(Shared by community members from Fond du Lac Ojibwe and Lower Sioux (Dakota) nations with the following message: "It does not matter who you are. You can do this if it is done the right way.")*

Beginning in February, find where red willow (red osier dogwood) grows in your area. Harvesting is not allowed in state or national parks and permission is required from landowners. Dogwood shrubs are six to 12 feet tall with bright red bark. If you do not have previously processed giniginige/*cansasa*, it is appropriate to verbally thank the plant for allowing you to harvest it, and return later with the processed offering. If you have giniginige/*cansasa*, offer a small amount to the bush before beginning the harvest.

Using pruning shears or clippers, harvest only as many branches as you need (a little goes a long way). If possible, trim the top 5 inches of your branches and replant the cut ends into the soil for new growth if conditions allow.

Red willow (red osier dogwood) bark has an outer and inner layer. The red outer layer is thin and brightly colored. The inner layer is somewhat sticky and green in color. The inner layer is what makes the giniginige/*cansasa*.

Cut the harvested branches to 6- to 8-inch lengths for each student. Plastic knives are a safe option for removing both layers of bark.

Allow students to carefully remove the red outer bark, while leaving the green inner bark intact. The flat side of the plastic knives works best for this, as it makes it more difficult to remove both layers at the same time. Waste nothing. Save the red outer bark for other uses such as for making tea or fire starters. (Figure 1)

Now have students remove the green inner bark. Again, this can be done using the plastic knives, although either side can be used now. Make sure that students do not remove the white (woody) layer beneath the green inner bark. (Figure 2) As it's removed, collect the green inner bark in boxes or baskets. Allow this material to dry, and you will have created giniginige/*cansasa*.

Use the finished product as an offering when students enter natural areas for lessons or activities. Bring some of the finished product back to the harvest site if a previous offering was made.



Figure 1: Removing the thin outer layer of red bark, which can be used for other purposes, such as for making tea or used as a fire starter.



Figure 2: Scraping the green inner bark from red osier dogwood to make giniginige/*cansasa*.

*Photos by Rachel Breckenridge (Gida camp teacher). Reprinted with permission*

## Long-term enrichment

Create giniginige/cansasa with your students and learn to use it according to Ojibwe/Dakota tradition during your outdoor visits.

If you have a forest nearby, learn to identify some of the trees mentioned in the story. Label the trees for future reference and introduce your students to each tree over the year. To identify trees, invite a forester or tree expert or use a good tree ID book such as the [Beginner's Guide to Minnesota Trees](#). You may want to add indigenous uses of each tree on the label, such as Maple (sap) or Birch (canoes, baskets). Consider planting some red-osier dogwood on your school grounds, with permission and support from grounds staff.

## Assessment Opportunities

Visit a forest or schoolyard trees. Review the rules the students came up with. Observe how they practice their own rules and assess their behavior when outdoors.

Have students create similar “guidelines” for their environmental behavior at school. Encourage the students to word some rules positively, using Do’s as well as Don’ts.

Have students draw pictures of natural items. Help them write words describing what each item is used for.