Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and the trajectory of contemporary urban society continue to clash. Yet, there are shared values, prospects, and goals embedded in food as a means of teaching and creating community that is invested in place. Architecture, and the design process serves as a vehicle to investigate and reimagine more productive shared futures that tangle ecology, recreation, community, and culture. These principles can connect people of many coats and colors through shared land management, traditional food production/preparation, healthy lifestyle, and place-based cuisine. These practices embed a person in place. If sustainability is to be a primary tenet of urban life in Minneapolis, this project emphasizes the importance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in creating respect, understanding, and value of our shared ecological and cultural resources and by doing so, creates a wealth of indigenous culinary knowledge sharing and development.

The project site, just south of a small passage between Lake of the Isles and Bde Maka Ska has seen multiple histories. From early Dakota settlement to its contemporary use as a recreation and leisure site. There is a deep palimpsest here. By creating multiple zones for TEK teaching and learning and traditional food harvest throughout the expanded site (to include the channel and other vegetated areas) this project enlists food to help contemporary Minnesotans celebrate the multiple histories that make this place so special to so many people.
public fishing pier rigid floating dock allow for change in water level while providing a single ramped point of entry at shoreline

floodable zone provides habitat for aquatic plant species and small wildlife from the interpretive area and dining areas.

office space and meeting areas are housed on the second level and have beautiful views to the south and larger meeting rooms on the west.

stepped areas provide access to the water’s edge for able bodied individuals.

informational stations provide changing climate data and historical anecdotes.

ramped access to canoe launch travels through a floodable area and connects to the water’s edge.

seasonal canoe rental/launch utilizes the existing infrastructure of the sailing piers and bike/scooter repair locates directly off the bike path.

outdoor staging area provides easy access into the water and allows canoes to be stored outside during fair weather maximizing the storage capacity of the building.

urban site plan

1. Main Entry + Interpretive Area
2. Fishing Pier
3. Public Plaza
4. Kitchen and Dining
5. Entry to Canoe Rental + Launch
6. Experimental Garden
7. Renovated Kiosk
8. Detectable Warnings @ Bike Path
9. Loading Dock
10. Office and Interpretive Area
11. Visual Signal @ Entrance to Table
12. Traditional Ecological Learning Station #1 – Prairie Species + Sun/Salt Tolerant – Pollinators
13. Traditional Ecological Learning Station #2 – Shade Tolerant Species + Fungus, Birds + Bugs + Rodents
14. Traditional Ecological Learning Station #3 – Aquatic Plant Species – Amphibians + Fish + Water Birds

view from bde maka ska

CATCHING Air Wind Water Light

main entry faces north
night flushing/ventilation + diffuse northern lighting

seedbank and kitchen
faces north
convection cooling/exhaust + diffuse light to kitchen

office and interpretive area
faces north
night flushing/ventilation + diffuse northern lighting

open office area
faces north
night flushing/ventilation + diffuse northern lighting

plaza section + south elevation

sky catchers 2/3/4
section through kitchen + seed bank

sky catcher 1
section through entry + interpretive + offices

The northern plains’ indigenous peoples (Ottawa,Sioux, Assinibois, Dakota,St. Croix, Ojibwa, and Anishinaabe) constructed a few types of dwellings depending on season and available resources. One of those dwellings is the incredibly efficient and adaptable Tipi. Flaps are manipulated with differing climatic conditions (wind direction, rain, snow, etc.) to allow the interior environment to deal with huge temperature swings and a wild variety of weather patterns characteristic of the glacial lakes and plains of Minnesota.

Sailing is a deeply rooted tradition in Minneapolis lakes during spring, summer and fall. Sails are manipulated to allow wind to bring the boat in almost any direction. Combinations of main, jib, and spinnaker sails on small boats can make a day with only a small amount of wind on Bde Maka Ska into a fuel free activity.

The northern lotus is a plant used by indigenous peoples in MN. Like most flowers, its petals open in response to their surroundings. The prevailing winds and direction of sunlight give the lotus a unique ability, while being an aquatic tuber, to power its many edible parts in an aquatic environment.

CATCHING Air_Wind_Water_Light

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