

# ANISHINABE KWEWAG

For the Anishinabe kwewag were once valued in a sovereignty that respected the women  
Valued as decision makers as the heart of her nation  
As wisdom keepers, negotiators, visionaries, seers, the nurturers,  
Women were honoured like the waters we are born into and out of  
In the life giving voice that caresses the memory of formation  
Not subject or slave not sexualized or demonized not silenced or disrespected  
These women will live again in the original dream remembered in this new day.  
-ANISHINABE KWEWAG, Laurelee K. Harris, 2010 (Excerpt and Original Art)



## Introduction: Hope springs eternal

The Great Lakes are the largest body of fresh water in the world. Not merely a resource, they are a necessary life-force. However, prevailing resource management practices have failed: people, communities, plants, animals, and the water of our Great Lakes are poisoned with toxins at unparalleled levels.

Increasingly, resource-managers are recognizing the value of participatory management practices. Despite purported efforts to shift management practices towards public inclusion, and in spite of public campaigns of Anishinabe women to raise the ecological alarm, they continue to be left out of the fray which may lead to dire consequences; legally and ecologically.

Successful participatory management depends on quality relationships. Litigation is expensive and depends on the adversarial system, which undermines and frustrates efforts at meaningful inclusion of Anishinabe women. By understanding and honoring the unique needs and legal rights of the Anishinabe, a partnership is possible that will both ameliorate current degradation and develop a strategy to ensure the availability of Great Lakes services for generations to come.

I have proposed a frame-work which could be a first step in increasing the efficacy of Anishinabe in protecting the Great Lakes as well as increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of existing Great Lakes management practices.

## Literature Review: Two ships passing in the night

Legal scholarship is focused primarily on litigation as a means for increasing tribal efficacy to manage resources linked to treaty rights and of increasing government accountability to act in accordance with their trust-obligation to the tribes. (Royster 1991, LaDuke 1994, O'Neill 2009)

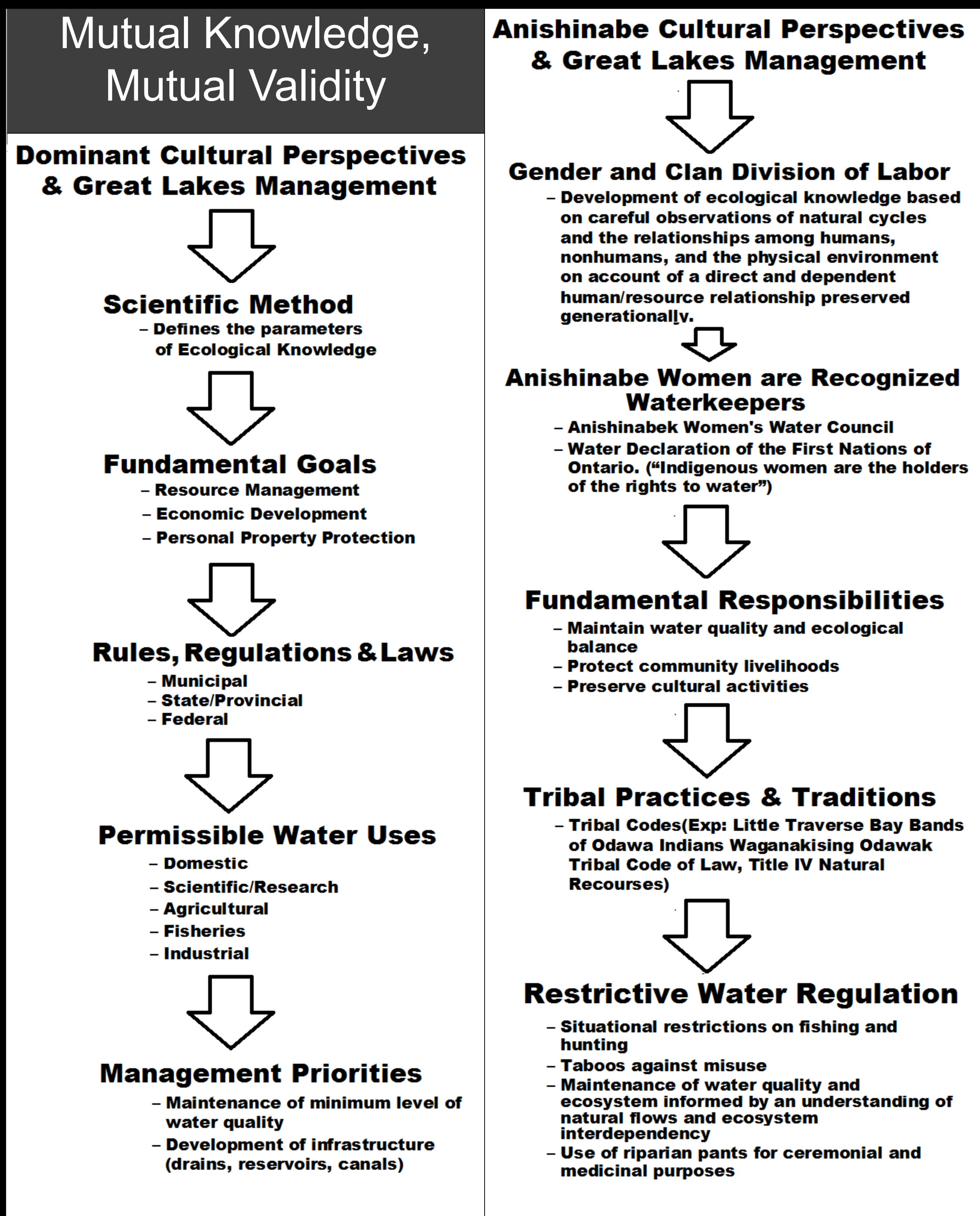
Participatory resource management scholars, while advocating for increased public participation, there are few resources acknowledging the unique rights and responsibilities that government owes to tribes. (Qiu 2006, Hand 2007, Wilmsen 2008) Furthermore, efforts to give Native communities a greater voice in management are often met with great political resistance and can be highly divisive. (Royster 1991, Borrows 1997, Hand 2007, O'Neill 2008) The heart of which is resistance by the public at large to accept that Natives have a greater right to hunt, fish, and trap, than non-Natives. Natives are not mere citizen of a State; rather, they are separate sovereign who secured their rights, independent of and superior to the rights of mere citizens, through treaties. (Royster 1991, Single & Fletcher 2006, Hand, 2007, O'Neill 2008)

Missing, are participatory management models that take the unique legal status of the tribes into account, and the political-will to implement them.

# Keepers of Ecological Knowledge & Protectors Of The Great Lakes Water

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## Proposed Anishinabe Participatory Management Thought-Framework

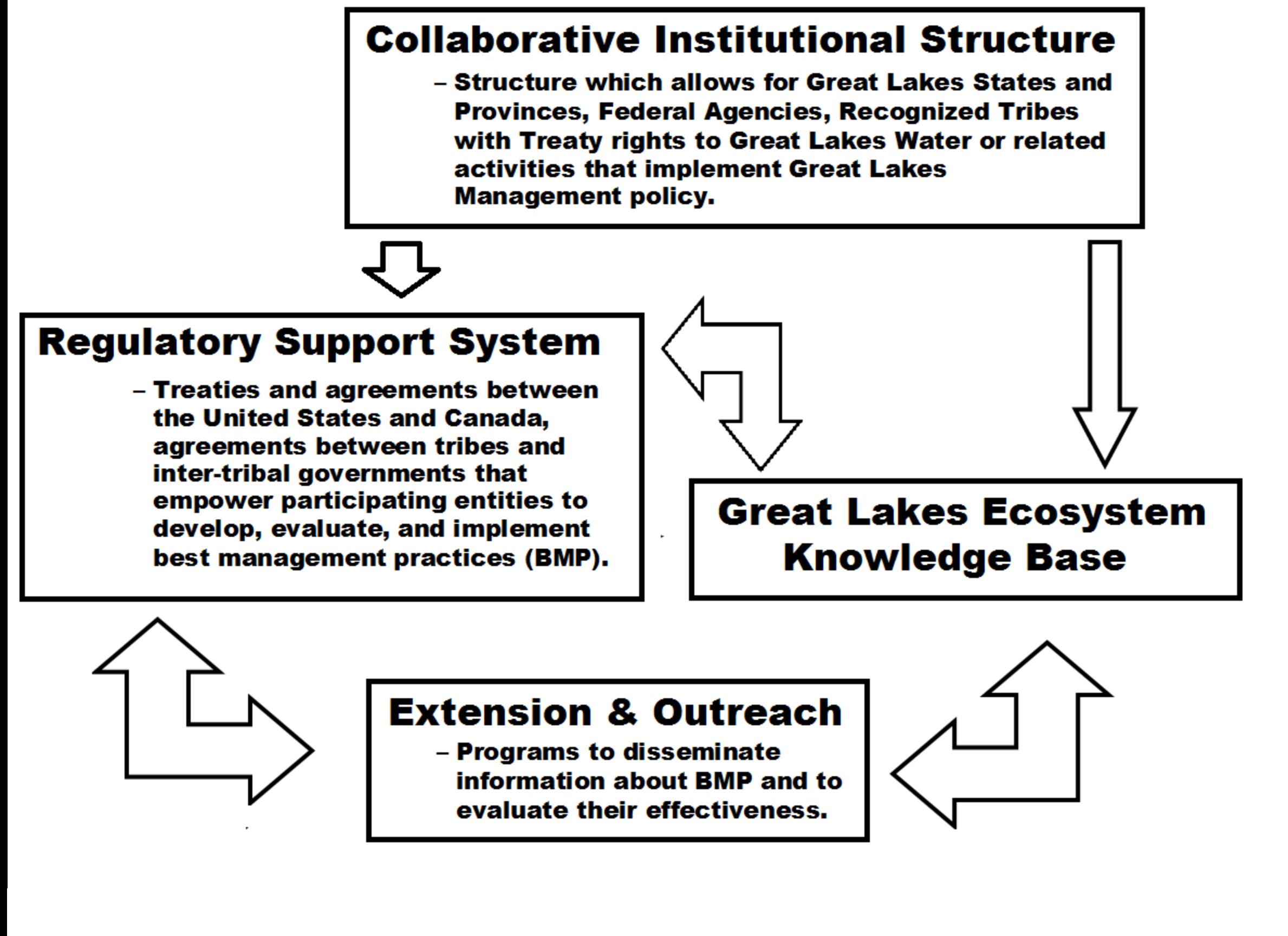


Historically, Native American's knowledge of the environment has been discounted as mystical or supernatural; it is neither. This knowledge is based on careful observations on natural cycles and tends to be qualitative in nature and highly localized.

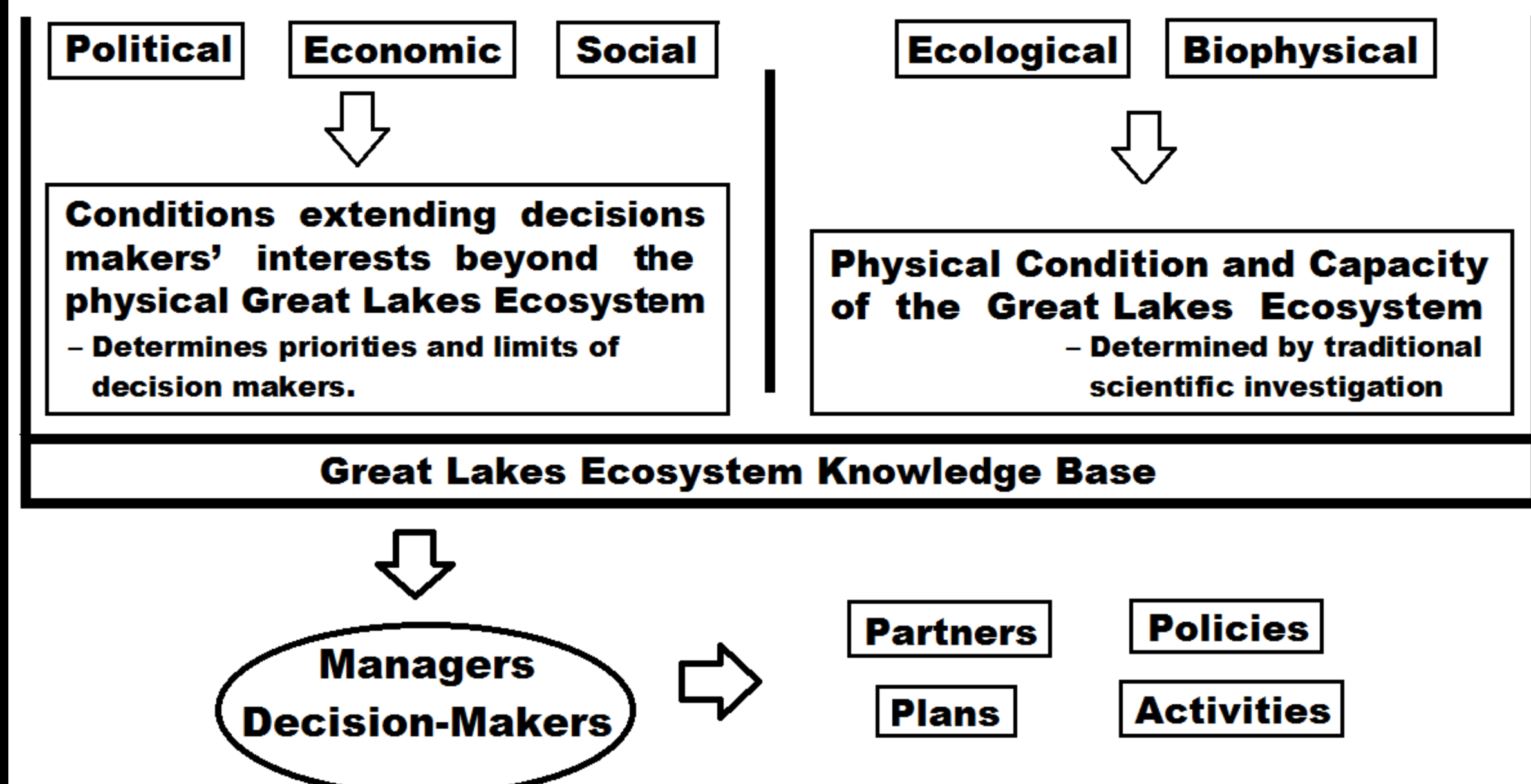
This knowledge is different from scientific ecological knowledge which is based on empirical measurements of natural cycles; however, each has its strengths and weaknesses suggesting a valuable partnership between them. (Kimmer 2000)

## Structural Grounding of Knowledge Protects Against Anishinabe Cultural & Intellectual Exploitation

### Proposed Anishinabe Participatory Management Model



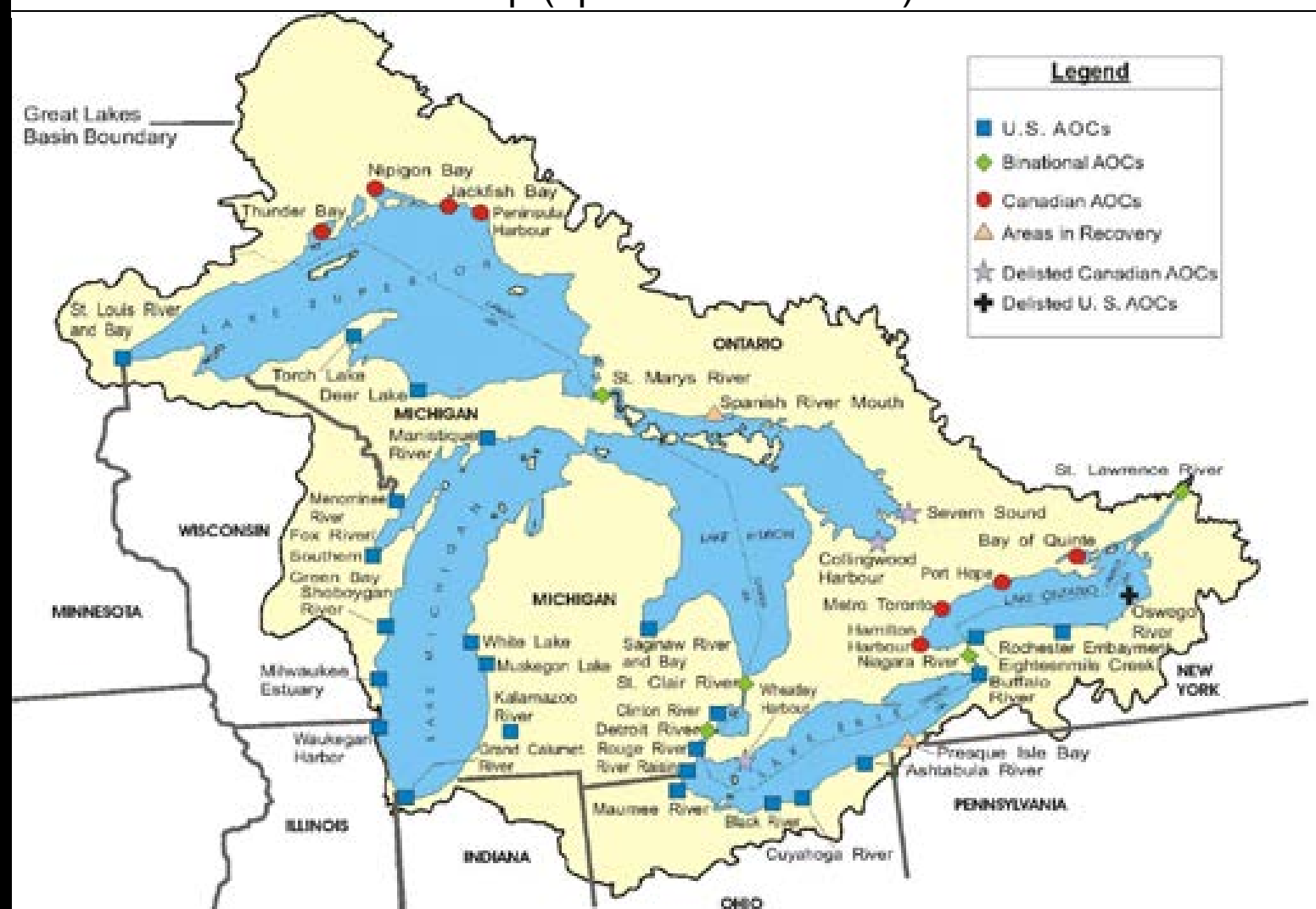
### Proposed Anishinabe Participatory Decision Model



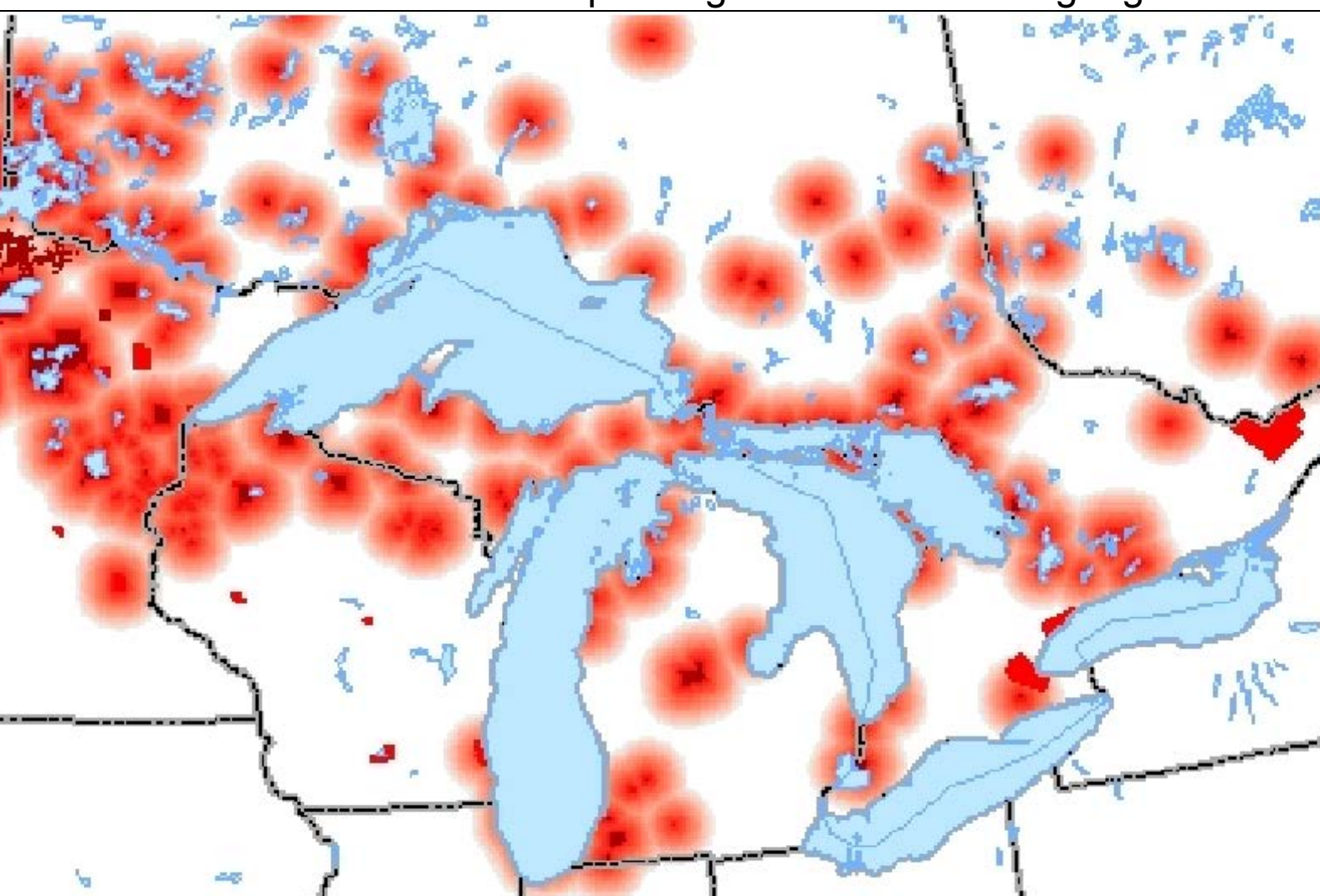
## Implications: 'Kwewag Maajaawag' or 'Women in Motion'

Great Lakes resource management is already conducted in partnership between the Great Lakes states/provinces, and federal governments, with the assistance of The Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission. However, as demonstrated by Anishinabe grandmother Josephine Mandamin who walked 17,000 kilometers around the Great Lakes to raise awareness about water issues carrying a copper pail with her along with the message that "the water is sick," managers are no doing a good enough job. Too often women are excluded from making management decisions. Superficial participatory management

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Areas of Concern Map (updates June 2010)



Location of Great Lakes Basin Anishinabe reservation with diffusion rings about communities speaking an Anishinabe language



does not lead to the positive benefits believed to flow from Participatory Management schemes. Great Lakes Managers must go further and ensure that Anishinabe Kwewag 's knowledge and interests are meaningfully incorporated with the authenticity of their own voices.

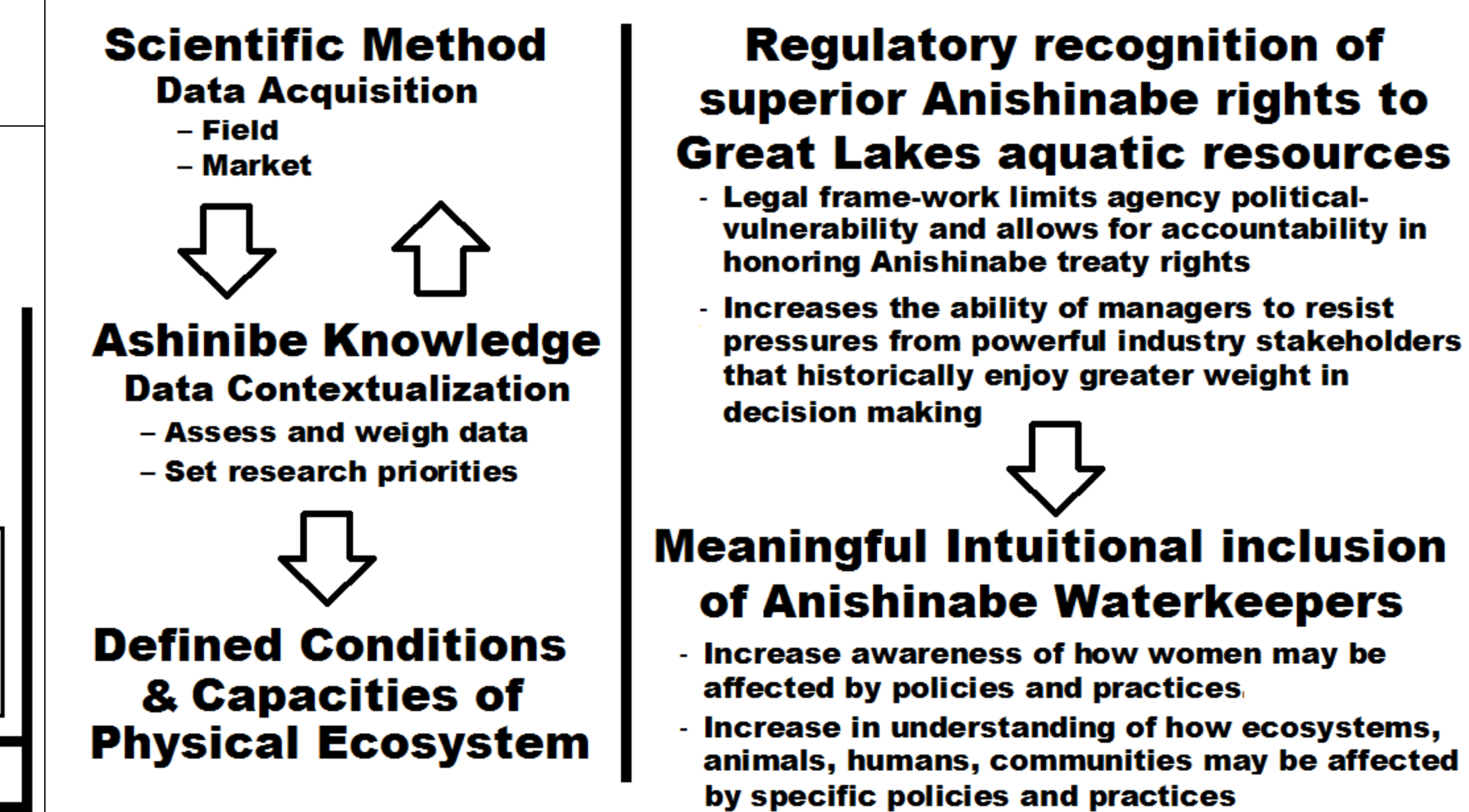
The model I propose provides a way to inform our management structures. The voices of these women, I believe, have the power to: 1) increase the efficient use of agency resources by more narrowly and accurately identifying Areas of Concern; 2) reduce government waste by more accurately allocating the appropriate resources by improving the administrative process for cite selection; 3) improve the level and depth of stakeholder participation ; and 4) ultimately improve The Great Lakes holistically.

Natives have argued for and won greater Native control over on-reservation resources, but continue to be excluded entirely, superficially included in the early planning stages, or considered as an afterthought in off-reservation resource management. Public participation in Great Lakes management decision making: 1) legitimized agency decisions; and 2) increases accountability by opening up the process to public scrutiny. Participatory practices have the potential to yield more successful outcomes because institutions, decision makes, developers, and resources would be grounded in local needs and realities. (Qui 2006 , Wilmsen 2008)

To ensure such grounding, insider knowledge, especially detailed local environmental knowledge, is necessary. Anishinabe Kwewag have been recognized, from time immemorial, as keepers of water and have acquired significant experience with the Lake's unique environmental traits and sensitivities. Because of Anishinabe Kwewag unique knowledge and experience, a successful approach is incumbent upon their direct and meaningful participation in Great Lakes Recourse management decision making.

Furthermore, by placing Anishinabe Kwewag directly in decision-making position, the management structure itself must be structured in a way that protects the Anishinabe community from cultural and commercial exploitation. As holders of all the accompanying knowledge and they should remain so without institutional pressure to surrender it to outside decision-makers.

### Great Lakes Ecological Knowledge-Base Development Model



### Development of a Great Lakes Ecosystem Knowledge-Base which couches physical knowledge in a socio-political context that strikes equitable balances between stakeholder interests

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A special thanks to LauraLee K. Harris who granted permission to use her original art from her 2010 series Nibi~Anishinabe Kwewag which depicts many of the themes represented here.