



# MS POSITION IN CONSERVATION SCIENCES

*What are the risks of CWD contamination associated with the Native American practice of brain-tanning?*

## Project Summary

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) threatens treaty rights and cultural traditions related to harvesting deer. Deer hide preservation, particularly tanned leather, has a deep history among Indigenous people. Minnesota tribal community members are concerned about the risk of exposure to CWD prions from brain-tanned hides made from CWD-infected deer. In collaboration with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Dr. Marissa Milstein (Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology) and Dr. Tiffany Wolf (Veterinary Population Medicine, Minnesota Center for Prion Research and Outreach) are recruiting a MS student in Conservation Sciences to study the potential risk of CWD exposure through traditional brain-tanning practices.

## Requirements & Qualifications

- BS or BA in wildlife, ecology, anthropology, or related field.
- Interest in multidisciplinary methods integrating ethnographic data collection with laboratory research; including facilitating the replication of the brain-tanning process in the laboratory.
- Strong work ethic; excellent oral and written communication skills; high attention to detail; the ability to work independently and with tribal partners; and deep respect for Indigenous sovereignty and dedication to cultivating respectful partnerships with Indigenous communities in research.
- A positive attitude and the personality to work/live amicably with others will also be an advantage.
- Preference will be given to candidates with Native American heritage.

## Want More Information?

- Check out the UMN [Conservation Sciences Masters Program](#)
- To apply, a formal application package must be submitted at [Slate](#) and includes 1) a cover letter that highlights experiences and interest in graduate training 2) your CV/resume, 3) your unofficial transcripts, and 4) 3 references. The application deadline is **November 1, 2025**.
- Please contact Dr. Marissa Milstein ([mils0025@umn.edu](mailto:mils0025@umn.edu)) for additional questions

*Image taken from the Lakota Times article "[Buffalo Hide Tanning](#)"*