

# GROWING NATIVE

## GREAT LAKES: TURTLE ISLAND

### VIEWER DISCUSSION GUIDE



Ojibwe Manoomin/Rice Harvest.

#### IN THEIR WORDS

"Before there was money, before there was capitalism, before there was treaties even, our people were living here and thriving here, and when you look at that and really feel that in your heart, you understand the beauty and the sacredness of this big lake, of wild rice."

-Mike Wiggins,  
Bad River Chippewa



Film location: Great Lakes

#### PROGRAM SYNOPSIS

***Growing Native*** is a four-part series focusing on reclaiming traditional knowledge and food ways to address critical issues of health and wellness, the environment and human rights. *Growing Native* focuses on Tribes, stories and events from four geographic regions, including Alaska, Oklahoma, Northwest and Great Lakes. Across the country, Native people are regaining health and strength through the recovery and revitalization of traditional knowledge systems of land, language, traditional arts and health.

The Great Lakes and connecting waterways have remained the center of traditional and contemporary economies for centuries. Meet the Ojibwe and a tribe that was relocated to this region—the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin who care for these lands. Natural resources are the Tribes' main economy, including the famous Red Lake walleye and wild rice lakes. *Growing Native* host Stacey Thunder (Red Lake and Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe) guides this journey by engaging tribal voices while touring Indian Country with those who devote their lives to caring for the land.



Bad River Manomin Celebration and Powwow.

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#### PRODUCER STATEMENT

As executive director for Vision Maker Media, I have the honor of visiting with many Tribal Nations across the country. I get to see first-hand the amazing work reservation-based organizations are doing to promote their traditions to younger generations.

At the same time, I see my relatives struggle. Many Native people have high rates of poverty, obesity, diabetes, drug and alcohol abuse and suicide. I watch young people struggle with identity—they see very few brown faces in the media—and even fewer that are Native American. I see the frustration of people who live in a food desert.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food deserts as parts of the country void of fresh fruit, vegetables

and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas. This is largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets and healthy food providers on or near the reservations.

We created *Growing Native* to reclaim our narrative sovereignty and showcase the stories of powerful Tribal leaders who are on the forefront of returning to their traditional healthy diets and activities. Visit people who harvest wild rice, camas and herd bison. Learn how language revitalization is strengthening Tribal ties to their place on the planet. See how arts and culture play a role in the Tribal economy, as well as cultural preservation. And learn how to make a few healthy ancient indigenous dishes.

Our goal is to increase awareness of each region's ecosystem, encourage stewardship of the land and reclaim the traditions that supported ancient indigenous cultures for hundreds of years. We believe these messages will resonate with all inhabitants of these places — regardless of race or ethnicity.



Shirley Sneve, Executive Director of Vision Maker Media.



Derek Brown (Diné/Navajo) filming at Mitchell Museum in Chicago, IL.

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#### BY THE NUMBERS

**1.** The Red Lake in Northern Minnesota is the sixth largest body of freshwater in the United States.

**2.** The Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians have operated a commercial fishery on Red Lake since 1917, which began during World War I to provide a source of fresh fish for Minnesota citizens. It is the only commercial walleye fishery, and one of the largest freshwater commercial fisheries, in the United States.

**3.** Some historians say the word “Ojibwe” or “Chippewa” is from an Algonquin word, “otchipwa,” which refers to the moccasins of the Ojibwe which have puckered seams.

**4.** The Ojibwe nation is the largest Native group north of Mexico with lands that extend from present-day Ontario, Canada down into the Great Lakes Region and west as far as Montana.



Chef Loretta Oden Barrett (Citizen Potawatomi) preparing food at Great Lakes Food Summit in Green Bay, WI.

**5.** The Ojibwe word for Wild Rice is “manoomin” which means “the good berry.”

**6.** Wild rice is not a rice but an annual grass that is naturally reseeded from the previous year’s crop.

**7.** Wild rice is sensitive to variations in the water level and typically grows in 1-3 feet of water.

**8.** The Intertribal Agricultural Council was started in 1987 to assist tribal nations across the country in conserving and developing their agricultural resources.

**9.** The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission was formed in 1984 to assist the eleven Ojibwe bands in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan in managing their resources based on treaties set with the United States Government.

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### EXPLORING THE FACTS

- 1.** In the film, Joe Rose Jr. says about wild rice, “As you know, it’s very, very important. It’s a cultural resource. It’s a part of who we are as Ojibwe people.” Discuss and explore how a “food” can be a cultural resource and even a part of cultural identity. What is it about wild rice that gives it this elevated status for the Ojibwe people?
- 2.** Wild Rice was once hand-parched over an open fire to dry the hulls and release the kernel inside. What are the advantages to using more modern equipment and methods to finish the rice? What possible disadvantages do you think there could be? Explore your answers.
- 3.** The Ojibwe people have always been intimately connected to the forest and lakes around them. Darwin Sumner says, “It was the woods helping me heal.” Do you think nature has the power to heal us? In what ways? What personal or cultural practices do you have as a way of staying connected to the natural world?
- 4.** With the collapse of the walleye population in Red Lake, the tribe decided in 1997 to place a 10 year moratorium on harvesting walleye. This required the people to value the fish over the immediate need for fresh fish. Explore how this “modern” decision is aligned with the earlier traditional practices and beliefs of the Ojibwe?
- 5.** The Intertribal Agricultural Council and the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin sponsored a three day event to explore and understand the vital connection between Native American health and the restoration of traditional foods. What do you think this connection is?
- 6.** In the film Leia Zeiss says that the new wave of thinking about organic food, sustainability, permaculture and organic are actually very old ideas long held by Native People. Compare and contrast the modern local foods movement to these ancient practices. What can we learn from the early practices of Native people that we can put into use today?



Don Charnon (Oneida), Horticultural Farmer  
at Tsyunhehkwa Farm in Green Bay, WI.

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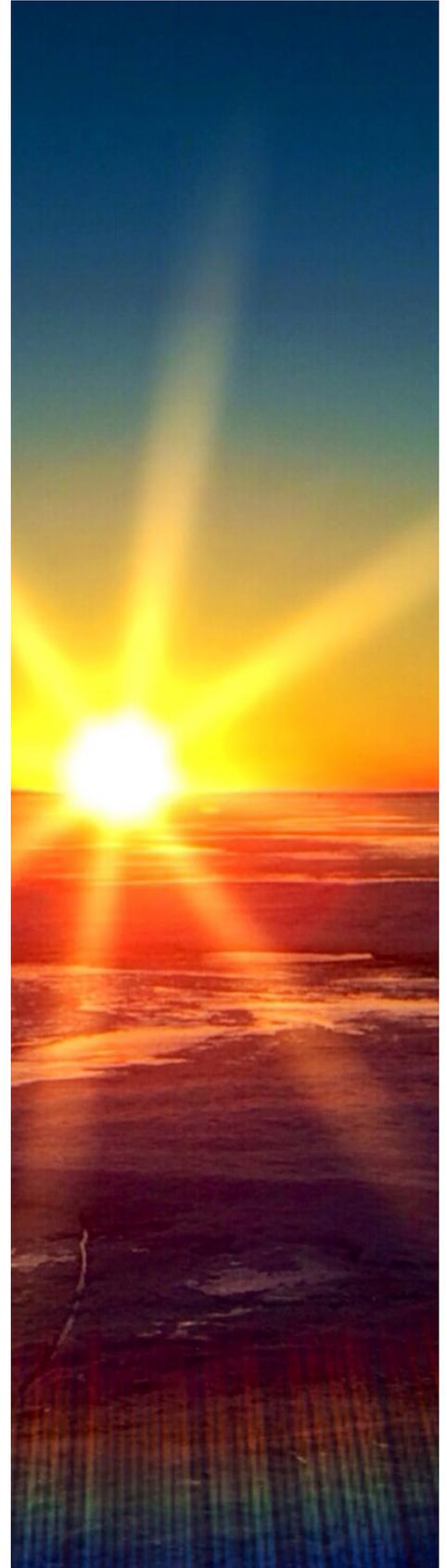
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#### IDEAS FOR ACTION

- 1.** Oral histories speak of the western migration of the Ojibwe people from the east into what is now the Great Lakes Region. Using online resources or books create a written or pictorial timeline of this migration as told by many of the elders.
- 2.** Wild rice is a staple food of the Ojibwe and is intricately connected to the early migration stories and oral history. Today technology has been developed to grow “wild” rice in man-made beds. Create a project to collect a pound of both natural wild rice and paddy-grown wild rice. Examine the differences, cook a sample of each, and compare and contrast the two.
- 3.** Wild Rice is a staple food of the woodland tribes but has also become a source of income and economy both for the ricers and the processors. Select one Ojibwe tribe and explore the economy of wild rice that is gathered. How is it collected? How much? How is it processed? Who are the customers that purchase it?
- 4.** The Red Lake Nation is entirely owned and occupied by its members. It is considered a closed reservation. Research the differences between a “closed” reservation and an “open” reservation. What are the differences? How does this designation affect the land base of each nation?
- 5.** The Red Lake Walleye Recovery Project has successfully restored an abundant walleye population following a nearly complete collapse due to overfishing. Document the steps taken in this restoration. How long did it take? What were the critical decisions? Then identify the current practices the tribe oversees to keep the fish population strong.
- 6.** People are often confused by the words and the varied spelling of the words used to refer to the Ojibwe people. What are the many names used when referring to the Ojibwe? Map the words and identify which refer to the language family, the larger group, and to individual tribal groups from different locations. What do the Ojibwe people prefer?

Sunset on Lower Red Lake in Redlake, MN.





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#### RESOURCES

**Vision Maker Media**

<https://www.visionmakermedia.org/films/growing-native-great-lakes-turtle-island>

**Intertribal Agricultural Council**

<http://www.indianaglink.com/>

**Wisconsin Ojibwe History**

<https://video.wpt.org/video/wpt-documentaries-ojibwe-history/>

**Wild Rice in Minnesota**

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wildlife/shallowlakes/wildrice.html>

**Red Lake Walleye Recovery Program**

<https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/red-lake-walleye-recovery-program>

**Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission**

<http://www.glifwc.org/>

**Traditional Foods Online Guide**

<http://keepitsacred.itcni.org/traditional-foods-resource-guide/>

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This Viewer Discussion Guide was developed by Jamie Lee, an author and former instructor at the Oglala Lakota College, where she taught for five years. Lee has a master's in human development and has been a communications trainer and an educator for the past 30 years. Her stories and articles have appeared in The South Dakota Review, Winds of Change Magazine and several other anthologies. She has published three non-fiction books, a novel and a collection of writings from Oglala Lakota College students. Her first novel, Washaka: The Bear Dreamer, was a PEN USA finalist in 2007. Lee has written more than 70 documentary programs, including Public Radio's landmark 52-part Native music series, Oyate Ta Olowan: The Songs of the People.



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For more information, please visit [www.visionmakermedia.org](http://www.visionmakermedia.org).

Educational resources for this film are available at <https://www.visionmakermedia.org/films/growing-native-great-lakes-turtle-island>

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