

# GROWING NATIVE

## OKLAHOMA: RED PEOPLE

### VIEWER DISCUSSION GUIDE

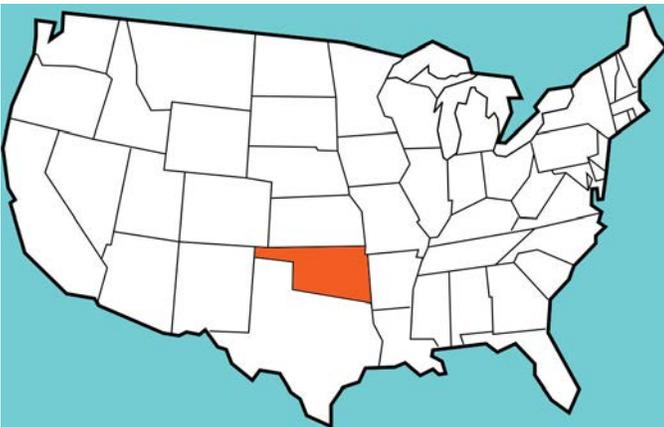


Host Moses Brings Plenty (Oglala Lakota) viewing the sunset.

#### IN THEIR WORDS

"I like to think that when I look out there and see seven or eight hundred children competing, performing in a variety of events here, that's potentially seven or eight hundred language teachers that are going to be out there."

-Daniel Swan,  
Osage



Film location: Pacific Northwest

#### 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.

Oklahoma is home to thirty-nine federally recognized tribes. Nowhere in North America will you find such diversity among Native Peoples, and nowhere will you find a more tragic history. Host Moses Brings Plenty (Oglala Lakota) guides this episode of *Growing Native* on a journey through Oklahoma's past and present. What he discovers among the many faces of Oklahoma culture is the determination, values and respect that tribes have brought to this land once called Indian Territory.



Image of beaded buckskin created by Vanessa Jennings (Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma).

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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.



Host Moses Brings Plenty (Oglala Lakota) interacting with buffalo at Cheyenne & Arapaho Farm & Ranch.

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#### BY THE NUMBERS

**1.** Winter count was a pictorial calendar drawn onto a buffalo hide, cloth, or paper that was used by many of the plains tribes. Each year was marked with one or two pictures or symbols that helped oral historians recall the year's events.

**2.** Oklahoma has 39 Federally Recognized Tribes.

**3.** The tribes most affected by The Indian Removal Act of 1830 were known as the Five Civilized Tribes and included the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Creek and Cherokee.

**4.** In 1989 Vanessa Jennings was named the National Heritage Fellow for her traditional beadwork.

**5.** Many Native American languages are “polysynthetic” which means they are composed of morphemes or words that have many parts. The structure is highly complex and difficult to translate into English.

**6.** The Intertribal Buffalo Council was established in 1991. Today it includes 60 tribes in 20 states who are working to re-establish the buffalo herds on the Great Plains.

**7.** The Great Plains region extends from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from Canada to Texas. These lands are home to over approximately 30 tribes.

**8.** According to national statistics, Native American people are twice as likely to be diagnosed with Diabetes than the non-native population (16% vs. 7%).

**9.** The Allotment Act of 1887, also known as the Dawes Act, designated 160 acres to each Native head of household or 80 acres to individuals. As a result of this process, lands held collectively by Native Americans went from 138,000,000 acres to 48,000,000 acres.



Chef Loretta Oden Barrett (Citizen Potawatomi) and Host Moses Brings Plenty (Oglala Lakota) during a Native cooking class at the Tasting Room in Oklahoma City.

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#### EXPLORING THE FACTS

- 1.** The Indian Removal Act of 1830 disrupted the lifeways of thousands of Native people who were forced to abandon their homelands and travel to a new land. Explore some of the ramifications of this act by the US Government for the people. Imagine if some catastrophic event suddenly forced you to leave all you know for some unfamiliar place. What would you do?
- 2.** In the film Vanessa Jennings says, “. . . the way you dress, cultural identity is a very important part of your culture.” Explore your thoughts and feelings about cultural identity. How is culture reflected and even defined by what we wear, how we eat or by our language, music and artistic expression?
- 3.** A surge of programs have emerged to help Native people keep their original languages alive. In the film, Herman Lookout admits that in the modern world, the only way to teach language is by using “English as an aid.” Explore and discuss the challenges this presents to language teachers and learners.
- 4.** The current health issues such as heart disease and high rates of diabetes in Indian Country continue to be a primary focal point for Native people. Explore how the decline in health is related to early traumatic events such as the Trail of Tears. Then identify several of the positive steps that people featured in this segment of Growing Native are taking to restore health and strength to the people.
- 5.** Sixty tribes are working with the Inter Tribal Buffalo Counsel to restore pure buffalo herds to the Great Plains. Explore and describe how growing these herds will benefit Native people. Consider this question both culturally and regarding the health issues in Indian Country.



Vanessa Jennings (Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma) speaking about tribal beadwork traditions.

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#### IDEAS FOR ACTION

- 1.** Food growers in Indian Country are on the move to preserve and restore “heirloom” seeds as a path to restoring the quality of local foods. Compare and contrast the heirloom plants with the hybrids. What are the differences? What has changed with the introduction of GMO hybrids? You may want to focus on a single plant such as corn or squash.
- 2.** Research the history of the buffalo on the Great Plains and then create a written or pictorial timeline that documents the rise and decline of the buffalo herds through time. Include the recent efforts to enlarge the herds.
- 3.** The Dawes Act of 1887 (also known as the Allotment ) designated a certain number of acres to each Native family. This restricted land use for Native people who originally used many hundreds of miles to gather and hunt their food. What was the short term and the long term result of this act?
- 4.** Identify the key elements of 3-5 Native language programs currently being run by tribal entities to revitalize and preserve original languages. Use programs featured in this film series or research and identify other tribal language programs. What do they have in common? How do they differ?
- 5.** In the forests and fields that surround us, food is abundant in most areas. Select a tribe featured in the film and identify the main staple foods that they used originally. What actions are they taking to maintain or restore that food base? What natural foods are available to you in your home territory?

Image of beadwork moccasins created by  
Vanessa Jennings (Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma).





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#### RESOURCES

<https://www.visionmakermedia.org/films/growing-native>

<https://www.ndstudies.gov/gr8/content/unit-iii-waves-development-1861-1920/lesson-3-building-communities/topic-7-telling-our-story/section-2-winter-counts>

<http://www.native-languages.org/definitions/polysynthetic.htm>

<http://www.itbcbuffalonation.org/who-we-are/itbc-today/>

<https://native-american-indian-facts.com/Great-Plains-American-Indian-Facts/Great-Plains-American-Indian-Facts.shtml>

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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-northwest-coast-salish>

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