Chef Sean Sherman: 'The Revolution Of Indigenous Foods Of North America'

00:00:01 Stesha
Welcome to tonight's program with Chef Sean Sherman, presented in partnership with our friends at Book Larder. We're grateful to our series sponsor, the Gary and Connie Kunis Foundation, and to The Seattle Times for their generous support of library programs. Thank you as well. To The Seattle Public Library Foundation. Private gifts to the foundation from thousands of donors help the library provide free programs and services that touch the lives of everyone in our community. I'd like to give a big hello and welcome to all of our attendees here at Central Library and watching the live stream. Now it's my pleasure to welcome Shin Yu Pai, the library's public engagement guest curator. Shin Yu has put together some wonderful programs for the library this fall, and the last event will be an event with poet and former cage fighter Jenny Liou on December 7. Mark your calendars now. Shin Yu is a former program director of Town Hall Seattle, and curated and produced events for Atlas Obscura while leading public programs for Atlas Obscura Society in Seattle for five years. She's the author of eleven books of poetry and a 2022 Artist Trust Fellow. She's the host and creator of The Blue Suit, a podcast on Asian American stories produced by KOUW Public Radio, Seattle's NPR affiliate. Here to introduce tonight's speaker, please help me welcome Shin Yu Pia.

00:01:36 Shin Yu
Hi, everyone. Thank you to The Seattle Public Library for hosting this event tonight. A few years ago, the Intercultural Leadership Institute and the First People's Fund of South Dakota invited me to Lakota territory for leadership training on building intercultural alliances. First People's Fund is a Nativeled nonprofit that provides direct funding, resources and professional development to Native Americans, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native artist, culture bearers, and community development funds. At this Intercultural Leadership Convening, our group of fellows sat down together for an extraordinary meal prepared by Chef Sean Sherman, which is made exclusively with locally sourced and hand harvested Native ingredients. As I tasted the tartness of gooseberries and the subtle sweetness of roasted acorn mash foods that were unfamiliar and new to my own palate, chef Sean queued up an eye opening talk on the history of Native land, Indigenous peoples, and a history of changing food ways that resulted from colonization. For myself, that moment of connecting food to

the specificity of a place and a people profoundly changed how I understood and experienced as the land as sacred. On behalf of The Seattle Public Library, it's my honor to introduce Chef Sean Sherman. A member of the Oglala Lakota Tribe, chef Sean was born and raised in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, cooking in kitchens across the United States and Mexico for more than 30 years. Chef Sean is renowned nationally and internationally in the culinary movement of Indigenous foods. His primary focus is the revitalization and evolution of Indigenous food systems throughout North America. His extensive studies on the foundations of Indigenous food systems have led to this deep understanding of what is needed to showcase native American cuisine in today's world. Chef Sean's first book, The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen, received the James Beard Award for Best American Cookbook of 2018 and was chosen as one of the Top Ten Cookbooks of 2017 by the LA Times, San Francisco Chronicle and Smithsonian Magazine. In July 2021, Chef Sherman opened Owamni by the Sioux Chef, Minnesota's first full service Indigenous restaurant featuring healthy Indigenous foods and drinks. Owamni received the James Beard Award for best new restaurant in June 2022. Please join me in welcoming Chef Sean Sherman.

00:03:59 Sean
All right, see if my microphone is on, you guys. Can you hear me? Okay. All right. (Speaking Indigenous Language) My name is Sean Sherman. I feel like there's a little feedback going on here. Okay, testing, testing. It's okay. I'll keep going. All right, so thank you for coming out tonight. Excited that I was able to make this talk work. We were just out in Spokane working with the Kellespell Tribe. We did two dinners last night, back to back. We had two five course dinners, and it was a lot of fun. And I've been able to do that work quite a bit ever since opening up my company, The Sioux Chef, in 2014, and we've had a lot of adventures over the past few years. I started out with opening up a food truck called Tanka Truck early back in the day, we worked directly with this community in Minneapolis called Little Earth Community United Tribes. We got the cookbook started in 2015, and it came out in 2017, and we were really excited to be able to finally get that out there just so we had something, because when I started, there weren't a lot of resources for the work I was looking for. So the talk I'm going to give to you guys tonight is just to talk about the work that we do, why we do it, why we think it's important, and the perspective and the philosophy that we kind of built around it and how we think about why we should be really focused on Indigenous foods, not just here in North America, but really on a global scale and just understanding Indigenous peoples everywhere and just really trying to understand how to celebrate diversities when it comes down to it, instead of really focused on homogenizing everything and making everything the same.

So, for myself, I grew up on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Pine Ridge is a pretty large area, and we have quite a few different reservations across South Dakota. Pine Ridge, all in all, is almost the size of Connecticut. And when I was growing up, we only had one single grocery store on the entire reservation. We didn't have any restaurants. We'd have to go out into Nebraska or Surpass City to find anything like that. But growing up on the rez was cool because we just had a lot of open space. I had myself and three cousins that live down the hill, and my younger sister, which we ignored a lot, which she doesn't really forgive me for, but we were just wild and feral and we just had a lot of freedom outdoors. We only had one and a half TV channel, so watching TV really wasn't a thing. And so we just spent a lot of time outdoors. And I just remember those days of the smell of the

dust and the grasses and falling on cactus and running into rattlesnakes and all the things that you see kind of out there in that landscape. But it was a good childhood. And even though we didn't really have a lot of money growing up and we're fairly poor, that didn't really affect us as kids because we saw the whole world just as something, as a playground, and we just spent all that time out there. My grandparents had a ranch, so we had a cattle ranch. We spent a lot of time on horses out there, and we spent a lot of time just doing ranch stuff growing up. And I remember my grandfather got me a shotgun when I was like seven years old, and that was pretty normal. I remember I was the only one home, too. And he was like, yeah, I got you a gun. And he left. My parents came home and was like, hey, my grandfather gave me a gun. But that was pretty normal. I mean, it was South Dakota and it was the rez, so it just was what it was. They don't do that anymore as far as I know. So I started working in kitchens at a really young age. I was only 13 years old when I started working in restaurants. My mom eventually moved us off the rez. We moved to a small town in the northern black Hills on the western side of South Dakota. It was called Spearfish, and it's just right on the border of Wyoming. Wyoming. And it was also a really great playground because there's this really beautiful canyon there and we're in the black Hills. And the black hills are really sacred to Lakota. And it was just really great to be able to spend a lot of time there. But moving off the rez, it was just my mom, myself, and my sister. And again, like a lot of families coming off the rez, we didn't have that much financial access.

So my mom was working three jobs, going to school and raising two kids. So I got a job as soon as I could. And just a restaurant job was a great way to go because there was free food and it was warm and I really enjoyed it. So I just started working restaurants all through high school. I went to college in Spearfish, also at Black Hill State University, and then I moved to Minneapolis shortly after that. So in Minneapolis, I continued to work in restaurants. At first I thought I was going to try to go to art school until I found out how much art school costs and decided that would be a hobby from that point forward. And so I just kept working in restaurants, and eventually I found art through food, which was fun because you can make plates look pretty, you can be very intentional about things and put a lot of thought into it, and it's a different kind of art form. So I really enjoyed that part of it. But for me, it was really a few years into the chef career when I finally became a chef at a pretty young age in the city that I had the epiphany of doing what I'm doing right now today. Part of this came from just being a chef is a really hard job. Restaurants are especially I don't know, restaurants have always been very toxic workplaces, and it's always been a rough go of things. But that was just all I knew was just living in the kitchen and working in the kitchen and managing people and managing kitchens. But it was a few years into that chef career that I realized that there was just nothing out there that represented Indigenous anything. There was just a complete lack of representation for Indigenous peoples in the culinary world. Everywhere I looked, there was nothing.

So I was living in Mexico at a time because I had kind of burned out at a restaurant and decided just to get away. So I just booked a one way ticket down to Mexico. I had a backpack and a guitar, and my son, he was kindergarten age at that time, too. And we were just chilling in Mexico, and I was just reading a lot of books because I all of a sudden had time to do that and then just trying to figure out what to do next. And then I just decided to start. Well, I didn't decide, but there was a group of Indigenous peoples living on where I was actually in this little tiny town called San Pancho, north of

Puerto Vallarta, and it was really small even back then, but I got really interested in the Indigenous group there, that was living there and started researching them. And I just found so many commonalities between their culture and growing up, Lakota in South Dakota and Pine Ridge, because they had such beautiful beadwork and really rich stories and religion and just a deep connection to plants and animals. They even did sweats. They had temiscal and we had sweats. And there was a lot of similarities and even the humor, I just thought, because whenever you're on Indigenous peoples, humor is just like a big part of everything. And so it was just very comfortable. And it just made me think that these guys are just like my long lost cousins. We're just distant cousins is all. We just live a really far apart, but we're all first peoples of North America. And it just made me think that when I was being a chef in the city, I had learned all sorts of food from all over the world. And then I really spent no time thinking about my own heritage, because it just wasn't in the culinary education that I was getting for myself.

So it just really became a question as to, like, what are Indigenous foods, and what does that mean to me as somebody who grew up? All my parents, all my family were on the rez, and what are Indigenous foods in today's world, and why aren't they anywhere? Like, why can't I find a native restaurant? Why can't I find native books about native foods? And I did find some books on this subject, but there wasn't really what I was looking for, because I remember asking my mom, do you have any cookbooks from Pine Ridge? Did your mom give you any books or any recipes or anything like that that were truly Lakota? And she's like, oh, yeah, I got you. I got a little book from Pine Ridge I'll give to you. So the next time I started, she gave me this little paperback book, and I don't remember what it was called. It was something just like Pine Ridge recipe book, something really simple like that. But it wasn't what I was looking for because it was just a bunch of fusionized foods with a lot of stuff. And I was like and my mom was like, wow, this is our food. It's like, I'm looking for food that doesn't have cream of mushroom soup in it. And I just really wanted to figure out truly, what were Lakota ancestors eating? What were they harvesting? How were they foraging? What was their knowledge of plants and animals? How did they break things down? I just wanted to know everything through a culinary lens.

So it sent me on a path to try to really understand that. And I realized that even talking to some elders, a lot of elders had also gone through a lot of assimilation and colonization, and we had already lost a lot. So it got me thinking, like, how far back did I have to go to think about when was the last in my family line where my ancestors had 100% of their Indigenous knowledge intact? And I realized it wasn't that far back. It was only my great grandfather's generation because my great grandfather, he was born in the early 1860s, late 1850s, somewhere in that time frame. It's loose. But he grew up Lakota out on the plains, and he grew up with what became Crazy Horse's band, which was closer to powder River in Wyoming, which is where they kind of roamed in a large area out there. But he grew up as a young boy, seeing all sorts of conflict and battles with the US. Government during that time period, especially in the 1860s and 1870s, when things were really ramping up he is 18 at the Battle of Little Big Horn, and he grows up to see the reservation systems really set in. All of his Lakota relatives get pushed onto reservations. He's there when the Wounded Knee massacre happens, and he sees his kids go through boarding schools and having to learn English and cut their hair. And I just feel like there's so much to witness within a single lifetime for one person even seeing

some of his children grow up to fight for the U.S. Government and just so much life in that little spectrum. And so I realized also, like, I was born in 1974, and in 1874, 100 years before my birth, all my Lakota ancestors had 100% of their Indigenous knowledge intact because they don't discover gold in the Black Hills until 1876.
So why did it take less than a century for us to get to this point where, growing up on a reservation, we didn't learn about our ancestral foods? Like, I knew a few recipes, but less than ten of them easily. And where did all that information go? Where did all that knowledge of my ancestors go? So that's really kind of what it came down to as a study of what did we lose and why did we lose it? And it really became a study of the history of things to understand why we don't have Native restaurants in every single city to represent where the land that we're standing on, because most cities you could find food from everywhere around the world except for where you're standing. And that just needs to change moving forward. So for me, it just became a study of what happened, because no matter where you are in North America, you're standing on Indigenous land. And all of North American history begins with Indigenous history, but our textbooks never really deal with that. It usually goes straight from woolly mammoth to colonization, and we're taught to basically celebrate the colonial history of the United States, but it dismisses all the violence that that part of history has against people of color, especially black and Indigenous.

So for me, it's just that question and trying to decide, how do I move forward? Like, what are Native American foods? And we didn't have Joy of Native American Cooking that I can order on Amazon to understand it. I had to dig deep to try to figure it out. Reading lots of dry ethnobotanical texts and history books and all sorts of things, just looking, talking to some elders. And just for me, it wasn't until I really started traveling around, meeting other tribes and starting to talk to people, I was able to start really to see a bigger picture. So I set a philosophy. So I decided with the foods that we're going to do is going to cut out colonial ingredients just to showcase what we had around us. So I removed dairy, wheat, flour, cane sugar, beef, pork, chicken, all those things didn't even exist in so many areas not that long ago, even including in this region. Right. And we have to just think about that. Our food systems change so quickly where we are, and we should really be thinking about what are the true foods of the land that we're standing on. So removing all those pieces, even removing jello molds, which I know was a hard one to take away, right?

So that became the mission to define what are Indigenous foods, what are pre colonial foods, and what does it mean to decolonize? And I also realized, especially early on, because I started getting pressed right off the bat back in 2014. I felt like as soon as I created the brand, The Sioux chef, and the name really came from old email handles that I used to have because I had sioxchef@hotmail or aol or some such, just to date myself a little bit. It was just a funny play on words. I thought it was never supposed to be a moniker. I was never trying to call myself a Sioux chef. I just thought it was a funny play on words. But when I first started getting all the press, it was always just like the same question is like, oh, Native American food. Never heard of it. What is it? And people are just so curious because it just wasn't around. And I feel like we've come so far over the past few years where it's been a lot more in conversations out there. I feel like there's a lot of Indigenous food sovereignty bubbling up all over North America and elsewhere.

So I feel like we've come a long ways, and I'm not getting that same question anymore. But I also realized early on that people didn't understand what I was talking about when I would say pre-reservation foods or precolonial foods or what does it mean to decolonize and things like that. So I always like to start this talk just at the very base beginning of defining what does that mean? So to understand the word precolonial, you have to understand what colonialism actually means, right? So the easiest way to understand colonialism is just to Google it. So if you Google the term colonialism, you'll get a definition, the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying with settlers, and exploiting it economically. And this isn't unique to North America, of course, because this has happened on a global scale and not that far back in human history, because a lot of this is happening in the 1800s, where a lot of the extreme violence is happening. So slave trades happen pretty early on, but they really ramp up in the later. Seventeen hundreds and throughout the eighteen hundreds. But it's affecting places everywhere, especially coming out of European countries. So we see people affected all over North America, Central America, South America, Africa, India, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, you name it. Colonization was going all over the place, right? And so much damage to Indigenous peoples everywhere across the globe, people who had been living in stewarding regions for countless generations. All this culture is in grave danger during this time period. And we've never actually exited a period of colonialism because they've still been removing and murdering Indigenous peoples in Brazil, just like still today.

So we have a lot of lessons to that we need to learn, and we shouldn't be hiding these histories because we definitely should not be repeating them. So for here in the United States as what it means for Indigenous peoples and people of color, it just creates centuries of racism and white supremacy that is still holding on very strongly right now. And we have to just identify that. And for Indigenous peoples, it's not talked about much, but during the slave trade, there was five and a half million Indigenous people as a part of that slave trade, during the same time that twelve and a half million Indigenous peoples from Africa were forced to help build everything over here, too, and other places across the globe. But we have to remember how little history we have in the United States, because the United States is a very young country. And if you look at just the United States in the year 1800, we're not much more than the original 13 colonies. Ohio is the western frontier at that time period, right? We're still at war with Great Britain. And what happens during this time period is this very young government, the United States government really has its eyes on expanding off the bat. And that was one of the biggest reasons that they split off from the British government or the British monarchy or whatever it was at the time. But it was just because they were keeping them from continuing to go and expand further out, because the British felt like they had what they needed and tried to contain it and to keep it tight. But the people living over here didn't want that. They wanted to keep growing. They wanted to get more land. They wanted to become richer.

So one of the first things that the young government does in the United States government is they create the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which basically lays the blueprint for how they justify taking over Indigenous land spaces. Because every time they take over Indigenous landscapes, they're able to commodify it and section it and sell it, and they make an immense amount of money just selling just countless acres of land. And that's just where that just kind of sets the tone for the rest of the

century of how they justify all this land theft going out there. Because in reality, during that time period at the beginning of the 1800s, even though European countries are taking huge swaths of areas and just drawing it on a map and say, this is ours. The reality is that Indigenous peoples are still living here the way they always have, stewarding their landscapes, the way they always have. Many Indigenous peoples haven't even seen European people at this time period yet, and we don't even really see the definition of our colonial borders until the middle of the 1800s. So it's not even till after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 that we have that southern border finally defined right there to make it look like what is America today? And so you just have to think about the intensity of that one century between the years 1800-1900, because at the beginning of that century, over 80% of that landscape is stewarded by Indigenous peoples. And by the end of that century, less than 2%. And there's just all sorts of assimilation, violence, genocide is actually happening. California wipes out almost its entire population within just a decade and a half.

So when they do a census in 1873, there's less than 150 indigenous peoples left in California when there had been hundreds of thousands of them at the beginning of 1800. Minnesota also has a bounty system, and in those bounty systems, you can make upwards of $200 for the body part of an indigenous person. And there's these stories that there's really bad stories, but there's a book out there called American Genocide that just chronicles instances, known instances of genocide in California alone during that time period. So it's really super intense. And as Indigenous peoples, we just see so much loss of land access, so much loss of culture, and it's just, again, so much violence happening against the Indigenous peoples of this landscape, and we see so much just catastrophic change because the colonial machine is in full effect, right? Just entire areas are just being ripped down, mowed down. Forests are just being leveled out. We only have, I want to say, probably 7% of the old growth redwoods left alive still today, if even. Can you imagine what most of North America would look like if there was just old growth forests everywhere that had been well maintained by indigenous peoples the way they always had been? But instead, people are power hungry, money hungry, and they just come out for profit, because that's what colonialism is. It's extraction for profit. And that mentality is still active today, constantly. And one of the things is that we lose just so much of our own.

There's so much agriculture happening in large swathes of North America, because corn culture starts at the bottom of Mexico. Belize, in those regions, shoots all the way up through Mexico, throughout the entire Caribbean, all the way up the Eastern Seaboard into parts of Canada and all the way up the Mississippi and Missouri River Valley and everywhere in between. And there's just a massive area where there is so much amazing agriculture happening in North America. And during this time period, even though there was, like, especially on the East Coast, there is so much advanced agriculture happening in other areas. There were two, but the very young government. Our first president, George Washington, one of the very first things that he does is send out General Sullivan in 1779 and orders the total destruction and devastation of settlements and basically orders the enslavement of all Indigenous peoples. And General Sullivan sets out that summer in May and accomplishes that over the single summer. So it's just General Sullivan's march. You can read about it, and there's written documentation about it where they're just burning these communities, these townships, and there's just massive agriculture around them, like six mile circles of agriculture going

on around them, and they're growing just a lot of amazing stuff. So at the end of that summer, general Sullivan writes back to George Washington and says, I have fulfilled my duty. There's not a single side of an Indian on this side of Niagara. And that sets the tone for how the US. Presidents, especially across the 1800s, work with Indigenous peoples, which is basically against, and even today, in the Haudenosaunee language, the name for US. President literally translates to town destroyers. Still today. That's just the word for US. President. And we just see all of this going on with Acts of Congress and US. Presidents. There's Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830, which is better known as Trail of Tears. We've got the Moral Act of 1862, which is really worth reading about, because that's how all of the land grant universities are still privileging off of stolen land all across the United States. And it should be called land grab universities. Really, they should change that name. There's the Homestead Act of 1862. The Indian Appropriation Act of 1871. The Dawes Act of 1887.

All these acts of Congress are constantly weakening and segregating and just always against Indigenous peoples and just justifying all the violence and land grabbing that's happening across that one century. In Minnesota, the Dakota people tried to rise up in 1862 to fight for their ways, because, of course, the United States government signed a treaty with them, which it wasn't upheld. And the United States signed many treaties, and they have upheld approximately zero of them. And you can find that easily in history, too. And so when the Dakota people tried to rise up, they were quickly defeated over a few months, put into a concentration camp just outside of what is Minneapolis today, alongside the Mississippi River. And eventually, they create the Dakota and Ho-Chunk Expulsion Acts of 1863, making it illegal to be Dakota. Or Ho-Chunk. Set up a bounty system so if they found native people, they were able to murder them. Leave lawfully. And as far as I can tell, that law, the Expulsion Acts, which became law because they're passed through Congress, are still on the books. So to me, it looks like it's still actually illegal to be Dakota or Ho-Chunk in the confines of modern day Minnesota still today. So when this group is finally kicked out of Minnesota, they're put onto steamboats, shipped down the Mississippi River to where the Missouri River meets, and then they're shipped up the Missouri River, dropped off at a site in what? Is today South Dakota, and then trained over to a new reservation called Crow Creek, which is where some of my mom's family comes from. And over half the people on that boat ride die because of the conditions at the time. And this is just one instance, because it goes on and on across the history in the 1800s. This is a flyer in Denver when they were getting ready to attack the tribe out there, and this is what they were just putting out there, because we didn't really have a form of militarism until later in the 1800s.

So most military operations were always militiabased and just getting people to sign up. So they would say things like this the company will be entitled to all horses and other plunder taken from the Indians. And this became the Sand Creek Massacre, which you can read about, which is really awful. And there's a variety there's a lot of these massacres that happened during that time period in the 1860s, especially a lot of them under President Lincoln when it comes down to some of the most violent ones. So we see just so much loss of food access happening because of the loss of land access, because of the violence and everything. And one thing we do learn in history books is how the American bison almost went extinct. And they say it's because of overhunting, which isn't necessarily wrong, but they don't talk about how the United States government actually was responsible for that particular move, too, because there's talks in Congress that you could find

arguing what to do with the Native situation in the west. And they're trying some work on the side for just completely wiping out everybody and just committing full genocide, and some were not. And one thing they did settle on was taking out their food source in the west, which is primarily the bison. So they spend a lot of money just paying hunters to go out there wiping out the bison for quite a few summers into the 1870s, even. There's little snippets like this in the history books. In 1874, United States Surveying Priorities report that there are 20 hunting hunters on the planes killing these animals for their hides. One party of 16 hunters reported having killed 280 bison over that past summer. So there's no reason I mean, it's no wonder why there was less than 500 of those animals left alive by the end of that situation. What was most damaging, I feel, for us as indigenous peoples was really obviously surviving that violence was really intense. But then after we're segregated put onto reservation systems, then it's really the loss of an eradication of our own education.

00:30:07 Sean
So if you take a time and a moment to just define the words Indigenous education and what that means, that as Indigenous people, that's what we knew. Basically, we had the blueprint to live sustainably with the world around us with primarily plant knowledge, right? And that's a commonality we have with Indigenous peoples all over the entire globe. So during this time period, we're faced with a lot of really intense assimilation efforts because we should have been downloading just generations of knowledge of plant identification, of how to build tools, how to build clothing, how to build lodging, food, of course, wild foods, domesticated foods, hunting, fishing, whatever it might be. And it's just my grandparents era, like they should have been downloading that stuff at the turn of the century, but instead, their education is completely replaced with Westernized education. So these boarding schools pop up during the end of the 18 hundreds. And I visited Carlisle Indian School, which is in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It was the very first boarding school that happened in this picture. There's hundreds of kids in here, of course, and they're all from different nations. There's so many different languages in there, so many different stories. These kids are forced to cut their hair, to learn Christianity, to learn English. And this colonization is happening all across the globe too, of course. But this is a really intense situation because this is a military run school, and these kids go through an immense amount of abuse, which wasn't typical for indigenous families because we didn't use corporal punishment. They didn't have to beat kids to make them learn something. They didn't use violence as an education situation. But these kids were faced with all sorts of physical abuse, mental abuse, sexual abuse.

And we're still feeling that in our communities today because a lot of our grandparents and even some of our parents went to boarding schools. My mother went to boarding schools, and she will not talk about what she saw there because it was really, really bad. And these boarding schools happened to pop up all over the United States. Deb Holland just did a report this year to just barely start peeling back some of the layers of what happened during that time period. They're also out there in Hawaii and Alaska and Canada. They're called the residential schools. But it's the same situation. And as we know well, the residential schools in Canada were still active up until the 1990s, and we're starting to hear a lot of those stories of what happened. And people started actually looking at the grounds around some of the residential schools in Canada and finding all sorts of unmarked graves of young children who perished there. And even Carla Indian School has a huge graveyard of young

kids outside. And they had to move the graveyard because it was too big and taking up too much space, so they moved it to a smaller plot. Now, all the bodies are all mixed up, and it's just so disrespectful. So in 2019, there was actually a ceremony, I want to say in Ottawa. And what they did was they tried to write down the names of every single Indigenous child they could find that had died in the residential schools only just in Canada alone. And they put all these names on a banner. But now we know that this is actually a short list because shortly after that, they started searching those grounds, finding hundreds of bodies around one school. And now they've searched a few schools and there's been thousands of bodies found. So I think it's really important just to watch this for a second and just to think about that, because we shouldn't have to worry if we send our kids off to school to get education that they come back alive or not. But this was the reality that a lot of Indigenous peoples had to face when our children were taken from us. That's the short list, remember? But we haven't even touched that with the United States yet. I know that we've been working with RedCloud School out of Pine Ridge and they're starting to do a land search just to see if they find anything because they were the first boarding school out there.

So that was basically the 1800s for us as Indigenous peoples in the United States. That was our experience. So the Indigenous experience in the 19 hundreds wasn't that much better because we're basically just living in segregated states at that point and there's just a lot of racism still. We're not officially citizens until 1924. And at that same year, they realized, the United States government realized that they didn't have any rules or laws to segregate us as Indigenous peoples because they only had rules and laws to segregate black and white. So they had to create something new, which is the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 to make sure we were put in our place. We go through a really intense time period of relocation and in the intervention policies just to go backwards, if I can. Also during this time period when the Nazi Party was rising, they started doing research and looking all over the world for any other countries that had rules and laws about segregation, about justifying violence and everything against another group because of racial bias. Right. They obviously found the United States, but deemed their policies to be too intense and too violent for them. So there's that.

We also go through 1941 to 1967. This one's really intense, and it should be talked about more because during this time period, that's almost three decades, right? 1941 to 1967, one out of three Indigenous children are taken from their homes and put into non Indigenous families during that era. And that's really intense because that's just another form of cultural genocide that's happening against us at that time period because these Indigenous children being pulled and pulled away from their cultures, have a hard time trying to find their way back to their communities. And a lot of times they're not accepted back into their communities if they do when their adults try to go back eventually. And I know tons of people that went through those adoption services because of that. And I think most of us who come from indigenous communities also know the stories is very common. And again, it's just the constant mistreatment of us as we go through things. We can't vote until 1965, like most people of color. And in a lot of areas we couldn't vote until the 80s because in South Dakota they wouldn't allow votes from unorganized counties, which meant native counties.

And today they just gerrymandered the crap out of everything so the native votes get softened anyways. We can't actually celebrate our own religions until 1978, which is well within my lifetime.

And it's crazy because the United States is always talking about freedom of religion that just did not apply to the people that were here first. So how's it going in post colonial Native America again, we've never really exited colonialism quite yet. We're still extracting for profit. We're still just leaving the land to waste. And this just happened during the last election where they didn't even remember who we were. They were just like we were going to use this as our tagline. It's like come down to a womney where's something else growing up on the reservation, growing up on the reservation, this was primarily what I grew up with. I was lucky because my grandparents did have a cattle ranch. We did have some beef, which wasn't always typical for a lot of families, but this was primarily what was in our cupboards was just a lot of commodity food products. And it's just like there's just a lot of salts and fats and just over processed foods. Just way too many carbs. Growing up with powdered milk, growing up with government cheese and all the stuff, we made all the food taste good. Like they're comforting foods, but they're not good for us.

It's not too hard to figure out why some of our communities are suffering from up to 60% type two diabetes rates and obesity and heart disease and all these foodborne illnesses. It's because of this nutritional access that we have, and we just need to do so much better. And when I was growing up, we just had those things like pork with juices and beef with juices, and it's just that with juices that really sells that product. Right. I chose, as we're defining things, to really think about indian tacos, fried bread, tacos, navo tacos, whatever you want to call them, right? Same thing. But there's no reason why all of us as indigenous peoples across North America should have to be represented by this one piece that really doesn't have that much to do with us. Because if you take time to decolonize this particular piece. Like, you take away the fry bread because we didn't have wheat flour. You take away the ground beef, but you can replace that with some other game or whatever. You take away the cheese and the sour cream, and you definitely take away those weird California and black olives, which I don't even know, but you'd be left with something healthy if you decolonize everything on there. Because, again, we're too diverse for this one particular piece to represent all of us, and we can just do so much better. And that's what I think is the exciting part, is just understanding how much amazing diversity is out there.

So that's part of how you understand an indigenous food system anywhere around the world is just thinking about the diversity, because you can't homogenize it can't say, what's a typical dish? What's? A typical Native American dish. It's like saying, what's a typical European dish? There's too much diversity there, too. People can understand that, right? So you have to understand that for North America. So when I was just out there, I just really wanted to understand all this and put it together. But part of it is just looking at North America, right? There's so much diversity just in ecoregions and bioregions and all the things like, we have different plants and growing zones and temperature zones. We have mountains and plains and swamps and coastal regions and everything in between, right? We have everything from Arctic to Tropic, and there's so much diversity of plants and animals and then to layer indigenous peoples, you start to see this diversity. And the best way to see that is through language maps. So if you look at an indigenous language map, you can see that indigenous peoples are living in every single part of North America, from the Arctic down to the Tropics. And we just imagine a day when we could drive across this nation in any direction, stopping at diverse

indigenous food businesses and experiencing all that amazing diversity. But we're not there yet, and we have a little ways to go.

And there's just knowing that these are very generalized color blocks, too, because they're very fluid. We don't have solid lines like colonial lines. Things move around a little bit, and there's other dialects within those huge color blocks and even other languages. So it's hard to even understand how much diversity is out there. But we have 634 tribes in Canada, 574 in the US. And 20% of Mexico identifies as Indigenous, and about 8% of Mexico still speaks Indigenous languages over European languages. So it doesn't really matter who's speaking Spanish or English or weird French, because those are all colonial European languages. English is a foreign language. You know, there's no comparison to indigenous diversity, to the colonial lines that are right there. So we should really be thinking about the true backbone, the true root system of what is North America, which are our indigenous communities, which are everywhere. So we're just really focused primarily on trying to rewrite what we know, because in looking at it through an Indigenous perspective.

So we need more Indigenous education because Westernized academia and Westernized education has taken up so much space. But it's just a point of view. We have so many other points of views that we can be looking at the world and lens through. So when we're defining Indigenous education, it's a little bit of all this. It's wild foods, permaculture, Native agriculture, seed savings, seasonal lifestyles, ethno, oceanography hunting, fishing, whole animal butchery, mycology, salt, sugar, fat productions, crafting, land stewardship, cooking techniques, metallurgy, Indigenous histories, stark knowledge, traditional medicines, food preservation, fermentation, nutrition, health, spirituality, gender roles, and more. There's so much to define within Indigenous education, and we really need that, because even if you have no Indigenous lineage or heritage, there's still so much important knowledge that we can understand from Indigenous peoples of how to be better connected to the world around us, how to find relationships with the world and the plants around us. So as we're doing a lot of this education, especially from a colony perspective, it's easy to think about things like proteins are the easiest ones, because literally any animal out there is game. And we do learn in our limited school systems that Native Americans very generally stated that they were able to utilize every part of the bison, right?

And we've heard that story, but that's really a story of resourcefulness, because as Indigenous peoples, we had thousands of generations of knowledge telling us how to utilize every single part and what to do with every single piece. And we utilize the same mentality to any animal and plants and plant byproducts and everything, because we had to be resourceful, and we were resourceful as Indigenous communities everywhere. We didn't have the privilege to be wasteful like we are today. Today, we literally buy something and throw it away moments later. We just create so much garbage. We could all be a little bit better when it comes to that part. And we shouldn't be afraid of animals if it doesn't happen to be a caliper or a chicken, because literally anything moving out there is game, and it's protein. And if you're eating protein, you should have a lot more diversity in your diet when it comes to proteins, because there's just so much out there for people to enjoy, including insects.

We put insects on the menu at Owamni in Minneapolis, and we're probably going through, when we're at our busiest in the summer, probably about 15 pounds of crickets a week, which is a ton of

crickets, because they don't weigh that much. And it's good for people to see that people are willing to try them, to be able to just experience them, and you can make them taste good. But for me, the biggest connection to all this was plants, because, again, as Indigenous peoples, we had that blueprint to live sustainably with primarily plant knowledge. And we just need better education when it comes to plants. I like to tease that our kids can name more of Kim Kardashian's exboyfriends and they cant tree species, and that's just the era that we're in. We're not teaching people the right stuff. We really need to have better education when it comes down to it. And if you just open up your eyes, stop calling everything a weed, because that means you don't know what it is, but find the name of that plant and find that relationship of what that plant can do for you in your life. And really, when it comes down to it, because there's food and medicine all around you constantly, and it's just looking at what people need to survive. Because as humans, we need basic necessities just to live. We need building blocks, we need some way to get energy, whether it's carbohydrates or fat.

And we have to have salts and sodiums in our diets, and we have to have all these different things. And Indigenous people just have so much more plant diversity in their diet. So Western diets largely ignored pretty much most of the plants across North America. And we could be learning so much better just by utilizing where we're at and understanding how Indigenous peoples had been doing this for countless generations. So that was a picture of Tinsela, which is really typical of Lakota and Dakota families out there in the Plains region. This is Castrat, which a lot of you guys might know. In this region, we have the true wild rice in Minnesota, which is not like the black rice you see in the store, but something really unique, and it only grows on the lakes out there. And just that knowledge of plants anyways, because all these coastal regions also had so much food just off the shore, so not only inland, but so many people knew what to do with all these plants and which seasons and which parts of the plants. And there's so much plant knowledge out there amongst Indigenous peoples because they had connections, they had a relationship, and they understood it, and they had thousands of generations to teach them that, to teach them how to live with the world.

And even in the desert, where all the plants look like they want to hurt you or maim you, you should understand that indigenous people saw nothing but food around them. So it's silly to use the term food desert, because indigenous peoples from the desert saw food everywhere. They just knew how to look at the world differently and survive. So there's just so much to think about. When it comes to agriculture. We should be adopting more, obviously, agriculture and more indigenous style agriculture, if we can, because there is a lot of diversity that came out of indigenous agriculture. We're taught today that this is kind of like the epitome of where we are like we've come so far, but we know this is going the wrong direction because these seed companies are trying to take over all the seeds in the world. This style of farming is obviously dangerous because it's using so many weird chemicals that are getting into the soil. You can't even get away from those chemicals in the food. They're basically in everything in the middle of your grocery store, and it's getting into the water and it's getting into our towns, it's getting into our houses and it's getting into our bodies.

So when we see titles like, how worried should we be that glyphosate was found in your Cheerios, you guys should be really worried because that stuff is nothing you want to mess around with. And we're just basically lab rats for all these giant companies utilizing all this stuff. We're going to find out

what happens to us after we've been microdosing glyphosate for a couple of decades. And it's not going to be pretty, but we're going to be finding out very quickly what's going to happen to us. So if you look at indigenous agriculture, you just have to think about, like, corn culture. And you can see the spread in history a little bit because just realizing huge civilizations like the Mayans, who had so much advanced architecture and just knowledge of math knowledge and all sorts of stuff, and great agriculture, and they're growing things like corns and beans and squash and chilies and sunflowers and cotton and tobacco. And then you get to Mexico City and Mexico, and the Spanish first show up there, same thing. They're growing the same kind of crops as the Mayans, right? And they're doing it all completely organically. They don't have to poison their water to grow food. And they're feeding hundreds of thousands of people at the same time. And it's very organic. And you can continue to trace the corn culture northward.

So this is a zuni farm in New Mexico where they were growing in the middle of the desert for thousands of years and figured out how to do that very, very well. And some of us might know about Three Sisters mound systems where you plant the corn and you plant the beans, and the beans will crawl up the cornstalk and you plant the squash, and the squash kind of covers the outside area. But that's a very particular East Coast style of growing. And it's just because there's too much diversity out there amongst indigenous peoples. This is in North Dakota. This is a lady named Buffalo Bird Woman. There's a book out there called Buffalo Bird Woman's Garden and it's a really great text because it chronicles her thoughts as a hidassawoman living inside right outside the Missouri River Valley. You can see in the background and she's using more of a row systems, but she's growing the same things that they're growing way down that the Mayans were. She's growing varieties of corns and beans and squash and sunflowers, not chilies. It's too spicy for them this far north. But she's using a buffalo shoulder bone hoe, and antler rakes.

So the Buffalo Bird Woman's Garden, a book, chronicles just one season of her garden from start to finish, and all the different kinds of seeds are using and little quips of her thoughts and memories. Growing up a Hadotsa farmer before she ever saw European people or utilized any kind of European tools, and just everything from beginning to harvest season. So it's a really cool book because it's a really unique look at indigenous agriculture, but it's also really unique because it's coming from a female voice, and female voices rarely make it through history, let alone a person of color. So it's just a really cool text that we're really lucky to have that's out there, because we have to remember that every one of these heirloom varieties of these indigenous agricultural pieces come from very unique communities, and they have so much story to tell and there's so much connection to these seeds with indigenous peoples. And we have to do everything we can to help support indigenous communities to maintain, because, again, there are giant seed and chemical companies out there trying to trademark all these seeds for themselves because they just want to control your food, right? But we have to keep these seeds in the hands of indigenous peoples who know their true stories and origins and where they came from and know how they grow and really have that relationship with them, because this is in danger. Nobody's going to do it but us.

Like, we have to work towards preserving this piece and preserving that diversity, that biological diversity, that's so important moving forward across the globe. We should be protecting these seeds

everywhere we can everywhere. There's just so much cool diversity out there. So for me and the work that I've been trying to do is just understanding all of this indigenous knowledge, trying to reclaim a lot of that indigenous education, trying to apply it to today and move forward and move forward with intention, basically. And I'm not trying to cook like the past. I'm not trying to cook like it's 1491. I just want to really understand the knowledge of my ancestors and apply it today so we can evolve forward as indigenous peoples, because we can walk in both worlds. We have everything we have today, and the more knowledge we gain from our ancestors, the stronger we become as modern day indigenous peoples because we have so many resources. Like, you could literally just take a picture of a plant nowadays, and it'll with high accuracy, tell you what it is. So there's no reason not to learn. You could just start with just walking around where you live and learning the plants right around where you happen to be as one step, because if you open up your eyes, you're going to see nothing but food and medicine. All around you. And that's just there because the world is very giving. We just have to know how to connect with it. And we're not that smart as human species. We have a lot of work to do, but we can evolve together if we try. And why not make food taste like where we are? You don't have to bring food from all over the world. You don't have to utilize the same spice rack that your grandmother that got passed down from your grandmother.

Like, we can use all these different seasonings and foods and flavors around us and take the time to harvest, take the time to preserve, take the time to grind things into powder, make your own pantry that tastes like where you live, and that's a part of it. And it's fun to make food taste like where you are. It's fun to just to go out and see nothing but food and flavor out there. And as chefs, it's fun to make food look pretty again, but we just try to keep things really simple, because, like, for the top left, it's like bison choked cherries, wild greens, wild onions, sunchokes. It's all these things you find in the prairie, and it's just easy. Just try to make food taste like we're a place in a culture and pay respect to the cultures that utilize these flavors. This one is rabbit, white cedar, puffed rice, maple cranberries. And you can literally just stand in a spot around the Great Lakes regions looking around and seeing all those ingredients right there. That's how we should be thinking about region and culture and food and really celebrating the amazing diversity we have across North America and just letting things be simple. We don't have to put butter and cream and ketchup on everything. Like, we could let food taste like it is and to make it healthier that way, too.

Because for us, removing those colonial ingredients, we're gluten free, dairy free, sugar free, soy free, pork free. It's like what every diet is trying to get to, basically. And plus, it's diverse and amazing, and it's real. It's not like paleo no offense if you're paleo, but that one always confuses me. Like, paleo from where? Which region of the world? There's so many rules about that diet. But it's fine because it is healthy. It is healthy. But for us, I just really want to see this go out to indigenous communities. I want to see us to create this access to indigenous communities, because so many of our indigenous communities don't even have access to our indigenous foods. This was for a big dinner we did in Muckleshoot a few years ago where we had a thousand elders gather, and we just had a really great time out there gathering with a bunch of their youth and just making a bunch of fun food, because it's doable. But most of us don't have the resources to do this on a daily. Basis, and we need to change that. So we just really believe in trying to reclaim indigenous health and culture through food, because food is such a powerful language. Food is a cultural identifier.

So many of us can think about a recipe or a food that gets passed down in our family from our grandparents and how special and close and connected we are to some of those pieces and how comforting those are. But for a lot of indigenous peoples who had to endure so much violence and assimilation, we've lost contact with a lot of our indigenous foods. But we can reconnect. There's a path to that. So we just really want to create systems that can just help get that out there, especially for the health epidemics or health situations that are going out there on out there. We need to curb that. We shouldn't see little kids being so obese. We need to change everything. We just need to change the way we're marketing food and the access that we have to food. And it shouldn't matter what your zip code is to how much healthy food access you have, but that's an issue out there. So some of the first things we did was just trying to create food businesses. So this was the first food truck we created called Tonka Truck, and we just tried to cook. We wanted to serve only foods of where we were. So we were in Minneapolis. So it was just going to be foods mainly from the Great Lakes and the plains in that region right there. So we had things like bison and rabbit and turkey and all sorts of fresh harvested handharvested wild rice and maple and corn products, working with different native farms, getting a lot of cool indigenous heirloom products in. And we were kind of worried when we opened this because we were getting a lot of buzz before we opened, and we just weren't really sure, especially with the native community, how pissed off they were going to be when we found out there's going to be no fry bread on this truck.

But it turned out okay. It turned out okay in the end. Like, we were able to pull it off, and we were able to really put our philosophy forward out there to do it, and that kind of set the tone. So when I created the company, the sous chef in 2014, it was really with that intention of just trying to get it out there in the world because it just wasn't there. We just need to make a change. We need to do something about it. So I also realized that I needed a little bit more resources. That was such a hustle to try to do everything with the for profit business. So I developed this nonprofit called Natives, which we also have active in Minneapolis today. And Natives is an acronym for North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems. And all we're trying to do is just two pillars trying to create access to indigenous education and trying to create access to indigenous foods. So we're basically utilizing the two things that the US government used against us by stripping us from our foods and removing us from our areas and also removing us from our own education and trying to use those two fronts to really do something impactful, and we believe it will be impactful moving forward. We're doing all this through our nonprofit kitchen, which is under natives called Indigenous Food Lab. And indigenous food. Lab is set up in South Minneapolis. And we've done a lot of stuff. I got the 501C in 2019. I did a capital campaign to try to raise money for a space for us.

I finally found a really cool space in this multicultural food hall in South Minneapolis and we moved in in January of 2020. And in February of 2020, we were like doing all the legal work, trying to get the lease all set up. And then I ran down to Mexico at the end of February and I was like, when I get back in a week and a half, I'll sign all the leases. And as I was down in Mexico, that's when the pandemic just rolled out. So it changed course a little bit, but it was okay because we sat there for well, it wasn't okay, but it was just obviously an interesting time. Who could have foreseen the entire food industry just collapse on us? And so we sat there like a lot of people did. I remember I taught myself how to do

the Rubik's Cube. I taught myself how to paint a lot. I failed at a lot of bread projects. And that was just like the first few weeks, right? And then where we were, where we moved all of our stuff, and George Floyd got murdered just a few blocks from our kitchen. And all the buildings around us literally just got burned to the ground during the social uprising that happened. And we decided we were willing to help back then, too. So we started doing a lot of food relief out of Indigenous Food Lab, which wasn't really the purpose, but we had the kitchen, we had the space, we had staff that wanted to do it. So we just started feeding a lot of the homeless. Because the homeless encampments exploded that summer. They were just taking over all the parkways, and especially in South Minneapolis, a lot of the homeless encampments were native, so we just kind of unapologetically got a lot of healthy indigenous food out there every single day.

And even as the winter came around, we started sending food directly out to travel community. So we're sending 100 meals a week at the height of it to nine out of the eleven tribes across Minnesota, and just even putting the food in the language of which region it was going to. So some of it was in an Asian Abe language or Jibwe. Some of it was in Dakota because it just makes a better connection with a lot of those elders that were in some of those communities and just making sure they had enough healthy food to get through that long pandemic winter, that first one. But now that we've kind of gone through all that pandemic stuff, we've been really working on trying to set ourselves up for the work that we're trying to do, which is really just creating a lot of curriculum of trying to define Indigenous education, moving forward and looking at academia and looking at education through an Indigenous perspective and developing that. Right now, we're about to release the indigenous food lab. We're about ready to open up a Native market space.

So there's a place where people can come and buy Native food product from Native food producers, and there'll be a small menu there so people can order some quick grab and go. There's also a digital classroom where we're going to be able to hold small community classes on all facets of indigenous education, record everything digitally, and house all of that in our website. So we can start to steward a lot of this indigenous education for future, so people don't have to dig so far to find it, and just creating a place to be, a place where people can come and learn with us. We want to help tribal communities, Indigenous entrepreneurs, other nonprofits, just to do the work, to get more food access out there in whatever capacity it might be. So we can help train and develop tribes to create menus and recipes or develop restaurants or cafes or just simple catering operations inside an elder center or youth center or something like that. We can help Indigenous entrepreneurs create restaurants or food trucks or catering operations or food production. We got our USDA licensing so we can be microsized copackers to try to erase that hurdle so we can see more food

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products get out there in the market and have the market to do that. The goal is always to make the Indigenous Food Lab replicable so we can move it around. We're already creating extensions in Anchorage, Alaska, bozeman, montana, rapid city, South Dakota and eventually beyond. So I can definitely see a food lab here in Seattle, albuquerque, probably Portland, San Francisco, wherever. We can create them all over the nation. And we don't have to stay within colonial lines. We can be in Canada, down in Mexico. We can be overseas. We can be Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand,

Southeast Asia, Africa, India, wherever. We just really want to create systems that help steward Indigenous education and knowledge and cultures for the future. At the same time, creating Indigenous food access, and we see a very clear path of how to do that. And there's so many benefits of the Indigenous diets because there's just healthier fats and more plant, just healthier and more diverse proteins lowcarbs, low salts, so much plant diversity. Most people live off of so little plant diversity because you go to the store, you buy the same stuff. You get some lettuce and tomatoes, some carrots, some apples and most people start counting, stop counting when they're in their twentys. But indigenous peoples had so much diversity and plant diversity in their diet because they had all. That thousands of generations of really rich Indigenous education to give them that knowledge, to know what to do with everything and just had really diverse pantries, basically to utilize for whatever they're making. And we just really want to work towards Indigenous food sovereignty especially for tribal communities who have basically been modern day segregated communities ever since their inception and still are today.

But we need healthy food access. We need cultural food producers, we need regional food systems, we need local control of food systems, meaning nongovernmental. We need access to Indigenous education and we need environmental protections. Those things we all need to get to a true state of food security when it comes down to communities. And I think that tribes have a unique ability because they have the ability to rewrite their food laws if they want to. And we can utilize them as role models of what's possible. To take something that's considered a food desert today and turn it around just by doing a few simple steps to work towards this situation. And environmental protections is a really important one, of course, because again, the colonial machine is still out there. It's still trying to extract for profit. We're seeing it all the time in places everywhere. And that's why you see so many Indigenous communities standing up to fight against these almost unwinnable fights whether it's big oil or mining companies or whatever they might be. Because it's just really important to understand why Indigenous people see it as such.

The most important thing is protecting our land because it's not a matter of like, for pipelines. It's not a matter of if those pipelines leak, but when and how much damage will they leave behind and will our grandchildren and our families have access to some of these amazing foods that are out there. And we just want to protect that for future generations instead of doing what we've been doing, which is just ripping up the earth, leaving it in devastation, kicking out Indigenous peoples living in those regions. And that's going to continue to be a battle for a long time. But we have to support those efforts when we see them. We just really want to push for more community gardens and permacultural landscapes because we have the ability to landscape any way we want to. So why not landscape with the purpose of food? Because to me, it just seems so simple. Like, let's just put food plants everywhere. We have so many open lots and we have so many just wasted space areas. We should just be putting food everywhere, but food plants that like to grow in those regions because lawns are fucking stupid.

We just need to really be focused on using land space better. Like we're just so stupid as humans sometimes and looking at places like Palm Springs. Palm Springs has 120 golf courses. That's a statistic. 120 golf courses. And Palm Springs is in the middle of the desert and it should not look like

that. But if we have the ability to do with that, just think if we were applying that to making food instead of keeping golfers happy, we could do so much better. We could create like that one town, if it has all that water access and all that stuff that they're doing, they could just be planting food and they could create pantry probably to feed the state of California in that one area just off of all of that space, right? So we just need to do so much better. We need cities to be able to jump on board with turning over land spaces that are just wastelands, right? And we just have to be aware of what's happening because water Crisis is real. It's happening right now. We're seeing it bubbling up in the news more and more every year. My partner MEK and I were just out in Jackson Hole and there's a really beautiful lake just north of Jackson, just Jackson Lake, right below Yellowstone. And we drove by there just a few weeks ago and it was just like mud all the way across.

There was barely any water there. Everything's just dropped so low. And this is going to be real. And so this is the largest body of water in North America, which is the Oglala Aquifer, which stretches from Texas to all the way up to South Dakota. Because when I was growing up, we were tapping into the Oglala Aquifer down in Pine Ridge. But it's starting to dissipate, it's starting to disappear because we're allowing companies like Nestle to come in and just take out as much as they want for very small fees. They pay like $500 a year and they can just suck up billions of gallons of water for the sole purpose of making plastic bottles. And we should really be focused on where water access really should be going because we just really need to be so much smarter. We knew Water Crisis was coming a long time ago when all the corporations started buying up all the water rights all around the world. But it's coming into fruition right now. So it's something we have to be aware of. So we just want to create support systems. So our goal again is to just open up these food labs and areas all over everywhere. We absolutely can, especially urban areas because there's a lot more resources in urban areas and they can just be regional centerpoints to help whatever tribal communities are around them and just create a space. And these can create restaurants. Because actually, when I wrote the nonprofit, I wrote it out to have a restaurant.

And I had to argue with the IRS a lot because the IRS said, you can't have a restaurant under the nonprofit. And I said, Why? And they said, because restaurants make money. And I said, no, they don't. And I said, restaurants should be considered nonprofits anyways. So we went back and forth like that for a while, but eventually they gave me my way. They're like, fine, you can have a restaurant. So we could open up nonprofit restaurants, which could be places for training, development, and just creating food access. And that was kind of the purpose of creating a nonprofit restaurant, which makes a more sustainable restaurant in general. So it's doable, because we need commercial kitchens out there. We need people trained to know what to do with all this food. So if we're able to say we're able to get a city to turn over a bunch of acreage and create a large food forest, we'll need a lot of volunteer work to harvest that food when it's ready. And we'll need people to process it, but we'll need clean and sanitary spaces to do that. And people trained how to utilize some of this equipment. So it's all tied together. And we just really want to see a lot more indigenous producers out there, which is why we got that USDA licensing. And we just want to create more of that support system out there wherever we are. Because we truly believe that if you can control your food, you can control your destiny. And that's a true statement.

That's how our indigenous ancestors survived for countless generations, because they had full control over their food, but everybody had to work really hard for it. There wasn't monetary value on their foods. They just had to work really hard. It took the entire community to work. People were harvesting, growing, they're farming, they're teaching kids how to do this stuff. They're building tools. Everybody chipped into the food system in some manner whatsoever to make sure the entire community had food, right? So when I started with awami, for me, awami is just a proof of concept that we can have a decolonized restaurant in today's world, and it can be popular. So when we won the James beard award this year for best new restaurant in the entire US. That's huge, because those rewards typically go to on that national scale, like people trying to get Michelin awards and things like that. And we're not that. We're not the fanciest restaurant. We're something else, right? But we just wanted to do something with a lot of intention. And wamney is a name that comes from what used to be this really beautiful waterfall, which is downtown Minneapolis, which was destroyed by all the mills that came in during the colonial period and ruined the waterfall. But our restaurant is still on the side where the Dakota village is on that side of the bank. So we feel really lucky that our first project happened on this really beautiful sacred space. So the true name of the waterfall used to be a Wamny yamni, which just meant the place of the falling, swirling water. And it was a place for gathering, it was a place for Portugal, it was a place for all sorts of stuff.

So we feel very lucky that we're in such a really powerful spot. The name for the Mississippi River in Dakota language is Haha Walkapa, which means river of the Falls, which signified this one thing. So they named the entire Mississippi off of this one waterfall. So when we named the restaurant Awami, it just really retooked the name of where we were, which is downtown Minneapolis, and it's a short name because the Wamni omni is a long kind of a mouthful. And we just, you know, again, it's that intention. So we try and prioritize purchasing from indigenous producers first locally than nationally. Even when it came to beer and wine, which can be tricky. We decided to do only BIPOC wine, produce wine, because we just felt like there was a message there to talk about privilege, because there's so little diversity in those industries. And we were actually lucky with wine. We were able to come up with primarily almost an entirely indigenous wine list because we found some indigenous producers out in California. We use a lot of wines out of all the Guadalupe in Mexico. We found some malware wines in New Zealand. Some South African wines from a South African community. And we're just going to continue to be on the hunt for more BIPOC production when it comes to beer and wine. And it was just something that anybody like.

I called lots of people in the restaurant industry, and nobody'd even been thinking about BIPOC producers in the wine and beer world. And beer was harder because we had 75 ish breweries across Minnesota. There was only one BIPOC owned one across, and that's pretty typical. And that's why I thought it was important just to create that conversation about privilege and diversity out there in those industries. And I just feel like there's so much creativity that we can have as modernday indigenous people. It's like we're not trying to create the past. We're trying to move forward in the future. We're trying to evolve, because as humans have to evolve, no matter what, we're going to have to deal with climate change, we're going to have to deal with water crisis, and we're going to have to try to figure out ways to get everybody fed, because everybody deserves food when it comes down to it. And we should be eating healthier, not just be eating all this marketable food that's just

usually carbs. It's usually just sugar products out there, because so many indigenous communities still today just have gas station foods as their main source when it comes down to it, and we need to do a lot better, and we just truly believe that we can adopt and save so much Indigenous knowledge on a global scale. The future is Indigenous, and we really truly believe that. So that's why this is an evolution and revolution of Indigenous food waste at the same time. All right, that is my talk, and I know that we're going to have a little conversation, and we'll be able to take a few questions from the crowd. Hopefully, it'll be multiple choice, please.

01:12:13 Shin Yu
So is it time for questions?

01:12:15 Sean
It is.

01:12:17 Shin Yu
Okay, great. So as you all came in, Stesha was handing out note cards with pencils. So if you have questions for Sean, this would be a great time to write them down. And Stesha will be walking around the room collecting them. Okay. Yeah. So I'd love to hear a little bit more about the Indigenous food lab projects that you've been expanding into Anchorage and Bozeman. And I know you were in Spokane recently as well. Really curious to hear about what you're doing here in Washington and if there might be an Indigenous food lab plan for Seattle at some point.

01:12:53 Sean
I always thought Seattle was a great place for a food lab as I was kind of developing the thought process of where we could expand to because we just really wanted to be a central location to reach out and group just to be in this region. And I could see a partner one in Vancouver even to spread out on the other side in BC. But I just feel like we're going to continue just to create a system, because some of it was in the beginning, it was just like if some stupid burger joint could open up 200 locations across the United States, within a couple of years. Why can't we use a similar situation to do something good and just to get healthy food access and healthy foods out there. So we just really wanted to create a replicable system, and we're actively working on it now. We don't have any of the extensions open, but we are taking the steps to plant those seeds to get those first. At least the first three will be Anchorage, Bozeman in Rapid City. But we have so much interest in so many other regions that will continue to find partners in different areas and figure out what resources will be best utilized in those different areas and just be able to share all. This education and curriculum in real space and just make it so we can do a lot of research and development in all these different regions because we can send some of our team to different areas, and people from those areas can come down to us and vice versa. And plus, just moving food around, especially as you open up more native market spaces, it just helps create a lot of distribution networks to get more and more food back and forth all over the place. This question I was writing down as you were talking, so it's a little less formed, but you're talking about this idea of the future as Indigenous. And I think what was really beautiful about this talk is that it was very much about narrative change and just raising awareness of Indigenous knowledge and education. And I think something I wondered about is, is there an

Indigenous future where you could see the curriculum that you're creating adopted into Minnesota public schools or public schools in general? I hope so, because we're at such a weird time in history where there's so many states out there that are actually going the wrong direction. They're rewhitewashing their history books because they don't want to have people learn things that are uncomfortable. But we need to we need to hear these stories because they're still going to be there. You can't change history, you can try and hide it, but it's still going to be there. And so I just hope that we can continuously just push it out there because we should learn from the past constantly. History teaches us so much, and there's just no reason to hide it if it feels uncomfortable. We should just learn and be better.

01:15:25 Shin Yu
There are so many great questions here from the audience that I want to turn to a few of them and just kind of fold them in. So how does the average person contribute to meaningful systems, change and honor Indigenous food and land stewardship when capitalism and colonial systems are so powerful?

01:15:43 Sean
That is a tough one, of course, but there are a lot of groups out there doing a lot of amazing work. It's really about connecting wherever you might be looking for some, whether it's nonprofits or community groups or whatever, trying to do something, trying to do some work, or some of the tribes just trying to do some work, just figuring out where you can support it's going to take a little bit of effort. It's not that easy to just say, just do this, but it's just a matter of just being aware, like plugging yourself into some of the issues that are out there, helping to protest if there's like, a mining operation or something that's going to mess up the environment. Again, we should be standing up for that kind of stuff. But it's just, again, plugging in as best you can. So it takes time, but it takes intention. How do you go about collecting, sorting, documenting, and researching all of this lost knowledge if so many of the sources are lost? Again, we can start to identify, like, all the commonalities of the indigenous pieces when it comes to education. Like that map that I had earlier with all the different things that we can think about, you know, and it's going to be diverse, some of those pieces, but we can just start to record everywhere we are, and we can rebuild, we can reclaim, even in areas where we lost. Because some tribes lost almost everything, including language. And some tribes have retained a lot some tribes have retained even a lot of their food waste. It just depends on where you might be. But we can take steps to start to preserve and to continue to we don't have to be stuck in the past as Indigenous peoples, as we're so often portrayed. You go to any Native American restaurant, it always feels like you're stepping into the past. But we're here right now, and we're moving forward, and we just need to be able to showcase that so we can evolve, moving forward. If we lost languages, we can create new names for things. Like, if we don't have the name for every plant or every bird or whatever, we can have elders do a naming ceremony. There's all sorts of things that we can do, but we can move forward. Again, it all comes down to intention, but we can move forward. This is a question about your book. How many recipes in your book did you create looking at Native food versus learning from an Indigenous person who cooked that meal a hundred years ago? Well, I did try again. I wasn't trying to cook from the past. I was trying to understand a lot of recipes and how people were playing with food and try to keep things really simple. But the philosophy was really, for

me, cutting out the colonial ingredients, just keeping the food simple, but trying to create modern Indigenous foods moving forward, because, again, we don't have to be stuck in the past. Like, we can evolve forward. So just creating a philosophy that we can use moving forward.

01:18:22 Shin Yu
Stesha, are there questions coming into the livestream that you want to share?

01:18:26 Stesha
Yes. Let's see. Yeah, my mic is on. We have a couple of questions coming in. The first is from Brenda. Sean. Are you working with Indigenous Knowledge labs at Deacon University? And then in parentheses, Tyson Yunkaporta. I might be saying that name incorrectly.

01:18:42 Sean
No, not yet. But I would love to I'd love to connect with them.

01:18:45 Stesha
Excellent. Okay, cool. Brenda, hook them up. And then we have another question that is asking let's see who asked this. Let me just check from Shaquita asking I wonder about any work or connections to Indigenous seed savers in the area. And I'm not sure if Shaquita means specifically in the northwest or in your area, but...

01:19:09 Sean
Well, I got really close with a lot of Indigenous seedsavers. I've been on seedsavers exchange board for maybe eight years now. They're based out of Decor, Iowa. They're one of the largest nonprofit seed banks out there. One of the largest seed banks out there, even. But also connecting with people like Native Seed Search, there was the Native Seed Keepers Network, which is a part of another nonprofit called NAFSA, which was a Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance. And just working with a bunch of different Native farms, native farmers in various parts of all over the place. So, like at the restaurant, as I said, we try to purchase from Indigenous producers first. We've been able to bring in lots of corn product from Ute Mountain tribe of Colorado, Pima tribe down in Arizona, Potawatomi Tribe, Dakota tribe, all over the place. And it's going to be important to continue to create that demand. But I think it is really important to connect with Indigenous seeds. And I've seen a lot of people get excited because some people just be like, oh, I wish I could sell that. But a lot of Indigenous peoples don't want to just give that up for sale because it's not about that. Because again, that's that extraction for profit mindset. Same with foraging. People get really excited about learning foraging. So I think they can make a lot of money off of it, but it's not the purpose. We need to have a little bit more respect when it comes to some of these things, and we should allow some Indigenous peoples to really be stewards of some of these and support those efforts. So there's a lot of complexities out there around seedsaving when it comes to Indigenous varieties, but we have to be aware of them. We have to be aware of that diversity, and we just have to do whatever we can to help support and protect those and grow them. Also, I'd say when I started this journey too, it brought me to museums like Smithsonian Field Museum, things like that. When I was at the Field Museum the first time, way back, maybe in 2016, they took me in their archives downstairs, and they had over

100,000 cubs of corn in their basement, just in like, shoe boxes from various nations. But they'd literally been sitting there in the basement for 100 years. So they literally became artifacts because they were originally living things. They should have been replanted and grown so we could save that diversity. A lot of seed bank, a lot of museums did that very particular thing and just let a lot of these biological wonders die, basically.

01:21:20 Stesha
Brenda does have a follow up question. Is anyone creating an international Indigenous knowledge database?

01:21:28 Sean
I started one, so there's that. I started one called Wakan, because in Lakota, Wakan is kind of everything that embodies everything around us, all the spiritualness, all the stuff, all the energy. And so it's an acronym for let me try to remember. It's been a bit, but it's like world ancestral knowledge of Aboriginal Native Nations. I think we did that right. But as acronyms, you have to have acronyms and nonprofits. It's just part of the rules going into it. But anyways, I created a place where, with that mindset of the classroom, the digital classroom, of just being able to store all this knowledge and putting it into a digital archive so people can tap into it, so people don't have to look as hard as I had to when I started this journey, was kind of the mindset. And as we grow, all of these food labs everywhere, we'll have these classrooms and all these other places doing the same thing. We're also starting to work with a lot of higher education and universities where we can take on research and development projects, and I just want to store everything into that online web portal, that vault, basically, to be able to steward Indigenous knowledge and just make it shareable and open source for people. So speaking of knowledge resources, somebody came up and handed me this card, and it's a list of local Indigenous nonprofits that are really in alignment with the work that you're doing. So for that question that asked about meaningful systems change around Indigenous food and land stewardship, these are organizations that could be of interest to you. Daybreak stars Chef Andre Jeremy Thunder Goods native Soul Uncattawa's Innovations Program and Nikhani native Program Great. And we hope that people feel free to reach out to us, especially at Natives or Indigenous Food Lab or to me directly if they want to, but we just really want to create connections. I just really want to try to create a support system to see more and more Indigenous food operations happen out there. All right. And we're just looking forward to connecting with people, and luckily, I've been able to connect with people from all over the world, too, and we're going to be in, like, Australia coming up this next year, and I want to just continue to develop. We did a big dinner in Italy, I don't know, a matter of weeks ago, I guess, but we had an Indigenous family from the Southwest cooking with us. We had a team of Indigenous Hawaiians working with us, and we just had just a really cool gathering of Indigenous chefs putting on an Indigenous dinner. And I just want to continue to make connections like that and really focus on because food is the center. It should be the center for all of us. It's the one thing we all have in common, is humans, and it's something that it's just such a powerful language. I just really believe in utilizing food as a language and connecting humans with it.

01:24:21 Shin Yu
We've got two more questions coming in through the livestream, and then I have a few others.

01:24:26 Stesha
Yeah, so many questions. Is the food lab from... Sorry. Is the Food Lab aligning with the indigenous food reclamation efforts promoted by Devon Mikusa at University of Kansas and Martin Reinhardt in he's in Northern Michigan. Thank you, Michigan. And then, for example, indigenous Food Challenge week awareness in early November.

01:24:49 Sean
Yeah, I was just with Marty up in Northern Michigan this spring, and they had a big Indigenous food gathering, which was pretty fun. We had Indigenous chefs from all over the place. They do a lot of great work. I've run into Devin a few different times here and there. And I think, again, it's just about connecting. There's a lot of people doing a lot of great work, especially on the academic level. But again, it's just like trying to twist it. Like, can we not be driven by Western academia perspective? Can we really twist that perspective from an Indigenous viewpoint and just not make it so dry, but start to create a connection and a relationship, especially with plants when it comes down to it, I think, like, Robin Wall kimmer really spells it out so well in Braiding Sweet Grass, for example. And we should just have more resources like that and more teachers like that to be able to teach that relationship building situation.

01:25:41 Stesha
From Emily a little bit, perhaps. Well, maybe not lighter. How do you feel about the most recent season of Chef Versus Wild in regard to Indigenous food sovereignty, exposure and knowledge sharing?

01:25:52 Sean
Well, I was just with Chef Nico, who was in I think it was the second one. Right? If I remember the episode I haven't watched. That's the only one I watched. And I also know Alan Virgo because he's from Minnesota and they've all been in the same Minneapolis cooking circuits. So I thought that was a fun one to watch. But I think it's good to see in Valerie, of course, because Valerie Siegress is from out here. She's muckle shoot. So it's good to see everybody representing some of that. And we need more of that. We need to see more of that on TV. And I'm exploring some possible TV situation for the future because I think there's so much good storytelling to do with that particular thing because it just really gets out there. Books are great. Not everybody reads anymore, but we'll definitely continue to make more books. And there is another cookbook coming out. It's a couple of years out. It's a really big one, but it'll be really cool. It's looking at North America from Mexico through Alaska and exploring all that amazing diversity through a cookbook. So I broke up North America into 13 regions to kind of mimic the 13 segments on a tortoise shelf, like to represent Turtle Island and just to showcase all this cool diversity. That and how we should be thinking about what is true North American food. And you're not going to find a lot of these recipes or ingredients at your grocery store. It's just given examples of how we should be thinking about North American food.

01:27:08 Shin Yu

Well, I know this has been like a marathon length program for you, but I thought I'd just ask you two lighter questions. Sure, go for it. Okay, so in addition to being a chef, you also talked about painting and one's thinking about attending art school. Can you talk about the connection for you between cooking and creativity?

01:27:23 Sean
I think for me, it's just a great outlet. I love cooking. If I could cook every day. I totally would. I just love cooking at home. I love cooking for the family. I love just making a nice warm whatever and just being creative. I feel lucky in Minneapolis because we have some really nice cooperatives and there's always some really just great produce local and all that stuff around us. And cooking with the seasons, cooking with some wild foods, harvesting some stuff in the backyard, whatever it might be. But I just love that creativity. And I love having this restaurant now because it's a playground where you have a whole bunch of indigenous cooks coming up with a bunch of new recipes, just giving them the creative freedom to come up with new specials and play around and just see what everybody comes up with and just recording everything as they go. So it's just a lot of fun. Well, so in that same vein, I know that you cooked for the Catastrophic Meal Project in Denmark. This is an event where ten chefs present Utopian, or Dystopian dishes to politicians, journalists and students. You are assigned a Utopian dish. I'm wondering if you can tell us what you made for that event. And if you've been assigned a Dystopian Meal, what would you make? That was a really interesting meal. So it was the second Catastrophic meal that they put on. We flew to Denmark and we went up to Jutland and we went to this gosh, I can't remember the name of that town, but we were actually outside of the town that was close by. It was called Rinkobing was the name of the town. And we went to this Nordic or Noordanish folk school they called a Hoshkor. And we worked with a bunch of students and faculty there. And what we did was I think they invited six different chef groups. So there was myself. They only found me because they Googled Sustainable Chef from the US. Or something, and it came up somehow. So I got invited. There was a chef from Toronto. He was a French chef who was doing a lot of insect usage and stuff like that. They had chefs from the Alicia Foundation, which was from a food lab in Spain developed by a very well known chef around Adria, and Albuli was his restaurant back then. There was also people from Nordic Food Lab at the time, and some people from Noma in Copenhagen. There was people from the Slow Food University of Gastronomy. It was a chef from South Africa. And it was just a really cool grouping of all these different chefs from different groups having really interesting projects. And they did give us a Utopian or Dystopian lens, and it was an invite only situation. So the guests came and we did it throughout this whole school area because these folk schools are designed for kids that are kind of right out of high school age into young adults who aren't really sure what they're doing next, which is basically everybody in that age range, right? So it gives them ability to go to these schooling systems for very little money because I think it was like I want to

01:30:14 Sean
say it was like $60 a month or something insane like that. And they get to spend three months, six months or nine months, depending on how long they want to go. And it's just a lot of liberal arts because they could study like writing, gardening, foraging music, whatever it might be. But it helps them get a step to kind of find a passion so they can move on further in life. Which also, in the end,

kind of helped me design the Indigenous food lab because I thought it'd be so important to have indigenous focused education to give that to a lot of Native youth, especially because we have so many Native youth that don't even make it through high school. And I wanted to create a system where they could be excited to learn things about their own culture and find a passion within their own culture. So that particular dinner helped me a lot. And this was back in 2016, I think. So what did you cook? What was your utopian meal? So anyways, I had Utopian, and it was such an interesting meal because it started off with Dystopian and then it went to me, and mine was, I got to make everything beautiful again. All these students played a part, and they all dressed up, their part and everything. So you had all these young Danish women and men all dressed up. Now, when I think back, if anybody ever saw mid summer, it kind of felt like that a little bit, but it wasn't as dark, but it was all very light. And I got to just forage and just utilize a bunch of things that were around us and using crosscultural knowledge and just try to create a sense of like we're just trying to be better eating things, like found things and harvesting foraging things and experimenting with different diversities and stuff. So we just created like, this nicksmalized corn cake with some crab that even though they grow all over Denmark, they're never used or just they call them just like trash fish kind of things, whatever. But we just use all just a bunch of herbs that we gathered with the students and just created little bites just to represent that and a wild tea, just using whatever wild herbs were around us. But I remember, like, one group after mine, I remember they left and then the guests had to go into this building and go through this long hallway where there's all these students dressed up as homeless people laying all over the hallway. So they'd step over all of these students dressed like that to go into this room where they're only divided by a plastic sheet. And then they were given this really long, elaborate table setup. And then they were given, like, cricket bisque to eat because that was a dystopian future where they're using alternative proteins like insects, and then as they're eating, it was also a statement of privilege, because there are people as they're eating. All these homeless people start to wake up when you're with the students and start clawing at the plastic behind them and eventually ripping up the plastic and taking the bowls from them. And then I remember another dystopian one. They were forced to sit in front of a mirror, put on some headphones, and then the headphones would tell you when to open up this can of food, when to take a bite, and how much nutrition you got out of that bite and just, like, suck all the joy out of eating, even though you're eating all, like, fake processed foods still. But it was just such a crazy back and forth for those guests to go through, and it was such a powerful statement.

01:33:20 Shin Yu
Sean, thank you so much for sharing your knowledge, humor, and your stories with us today here in Seattle. We'd love it if you'd stick around and sign some books.

01:33:28 Sean
Absolutely, we'll sign some books. So all right, thank you guys for coming.

01:33:40 Stesha
I'm not sure if my mic oh, yes, it is working. I just want to take a minute to thank both of you. Thank you, Sean. Thank you, Shin Yu. Book Larder have copies of Sean's book at the table to your right there. And if you're watching online, you can of course find his books at their website, booklarter.com,

and at the library, of course, spl.org. We're so grateful to everybody who made tonight's program possible. Thank you to our friends over at Book Larder for being here. And thanks to our sponsors, the Gary and Connie Kunis Foundation, The Seattle Times and The Seattle Public Library Foundation. And of course, thanks to all of you for being here and joining us online. Good night. We'll see you next time.