



Winona La Duke Speaks

Inda-wei mo-ga-na-tuk!

That is the word for 'hello' in my language. I'm saying 'hello relatives' Hello, farming people. We are very thankful to be here with you from the Ojaway nation, which is in the central part of North America. We are between the United States and Canada. And we were here long before the United States and Canada. I am thankful to be here, along with many other indigenous people from North America, to talk about our relationship to our food. The Creator gave us food. He gave us food as medicine and we have a spiritual relationship to those gifts that the Creator gave us. We are instructed, *inda-wei mo-ga-na-tuk*, that they are our relatives, whether they have wings whether they have fins, whether they have hooves, whether they have paws, or whether they have roots. They are our relatives. We are no better than they and we are entirely dependent upon them for our lives. It is that relationship that we, as Anishinaabe, as indigenous people, and as farmers that we affirm in our Thanksgiving feasts, in our ceremonies, and in our work on the land. Five hundred years ago, a man came from here named Christopher Columbus. He came to our continent and he was looking for the wrong thing. He was looking for slaves and he was looking for gold, but the greatest wealth of mankind is the food that came from the Americas. That is what we are discussing here. We have recovered and discovered that the food is that which unites us. No matter if we speak Russian, no matter if we are brown or red or white, we are all reliant upon that.

From our communities came many of the foods that we see here today. Corn, tomatoes, potatoes, chocolate came from the Americas, as did many of the squash and bean varieties that are today consumed around the world. We are very thankful for being a part of the world's agricultural tradition. The process of colonization has affected all of our communities, whether we are Irish, whether we are from Kenya, from South Africa, from Scotland, or if we are indigenous peoples from the Americas. The process of colonization has separated us from our land, from our teachings, from our ability to sustain our ways of living, has taken our resources, our wealth and our languages. The scorched earth policies of the last centuries are today in many ways replicated in military systems throughout the world and the scorched earth policies left behind by corporations like Monsanto. Our communities in the Americas are recovering our seeds and recovering our land.

I come from an Indian reservation in northwestern Minnesota, where today we are in a struggle to protect our wild rice, that which was given to us by the Creator — our most sacred food. We struggle to protect it from patenting and from genetic modification and that struggle, we find, unites us with farmers everywhere else in the world. We know, as you do, that life forms do not belong to corporations — those were given to us by the Creator. And we know, as you do, that one of the greatest threats to all life forms today is genetic modification with the potential for contaminating our most ancient seeds, our most ancient parts of creation.




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We also know, as you do, in the words of one of our farmers who came here in our delegation from the Dineh Nation, that the water is for the corn. The water is not for the mining companies, it is not for the Bechtel corporation, it is not for privatization. The water is for the relatives, whether they have wings, whether they have fins, whether they have two legs or whether they have roots. Terra Madre is a part of recovering those traditions. We are honored to be here with farmers and harvesters from many parts of the world who are in this process of saying, "No. That is enough". We will stand on our land, we will stand on our rivers, we will stand by our oceans and we will say: "You cannot take our life blood". And we will, through that process of our prayers, our food, our ceremonies, our hard work, recover our relationship to our relatives who are our food. And through that process ensure — our work today ensures — that our generations ahead, seven generations from now, will have food, will have land and will be able to continue these traditions which have sustained us for generations.

Wi-guich-miu. Thank you very much for your time.




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