



# Kanenon:we - Original Seeds

**Kanenon:we - Original Seeds** (pronounced *Ga nah-seed, ooh we-original*) is a short documentary featuring three Indigenous women who are stepping back into their sacred responsibility as seed keepers, honoring the work of our ancestors by regenerating and rematriating sacred seeds for future generations, and offering a glimpse into the challenges facing the world related to food security.

(Runtime: 27 minutes)



## The Seed Keepers



**Angela Ferguson**, grew up on Tuscarora Nation territory and now supervises the Onondaga Nation Farm, promoting food sovereignty. She prepares traditional foods, shares knowledge of Indigenous seeds and cooking, and co-founded Braiding the Sacred, a pan-Indigenous corn growers' network.

**"The seeds do better when they grow on the land they are familiar with the most and surrounded by their own songs and their own language."**

— Angela Ferguson, *Kanenon:we - Original Seeds*



**Dr. Rebecca Webster**, a Oneida Nation citizen, is an Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. Her research focuses on tribal governance and food sovereignty, viewing Indigenous farming as an act of resistance and self-determination. She farms on her homestead, sharing practices via her YouTube channel, "Ukwakhwa (Our Foods)," and through the non-profit Ukwakhwa, Inc. She's also a founding member of two Oneida farming cooperatives focused on heirloom crops.

**"We recognized how fragile our food system is. This is about empowering our people to be able to reclaim the processing and growing of our indigenous foods."**

— Rebecca Webster, *Kanenon:we - Original Seeds*



**Rowen White** is an Indigenous Seedkeeper and storyteller from the Mohawk community of Akwesasne. She champions Indigenous food sovereignty through community healing and the Indigenous Seedkeepers Network, which restores Indigenous seed commons. She also directs Sierra Seeds, fostering Indigenous seed stewardship and education. [www.sierraseeds.org](http://www.sierraseeds.org)

**"Indigenous peoples are 5 percent of the world's population. They inhabit about 1/4 of the surface of the globe. Inside of those Indigenous communities is 80% of the planet's remaining biodiversity. The Indigenous land and seed stewardship are these enclaves of culture and climate sanity."**

— Rowen White *Kanenon:we - Original Seeds*

## Higher Education Connections

Use **Kanenon:we - Original Seeds** in:

- 🌱 **Agriculture/Horticulture Courses** can incorporate Indigenous seed-saving practices into studies of sustainable agriculture, crop diversity, and traditional farming methods.
- 🌱 **Anthropology/Sociology** courses can focus on the cultural and social aspects of indigenous seed collection, including knowledge systems, traditional practices, and the role of seeds in community identity and food security.
- 🌱 **Botany/Plant Biology Courses** can incorporate Ethnobotany, Plant Taxonomy, Ecology, and Conservation Biology can incorporate indigenous seed collection techniques and their importance.
- 🌱 **Environmental Studies/Sustainability Studies** provides a broad context for exploring the ecological and social implications of indigenous seed collection, linking it to broader issues of biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation.
- 🌱 **Indigenous Studies/Native American Studies** to center Indigenous women's knowledge and perspectives on seed collection, indigenous storytelling, the history of forced displacement, historical trauma, and rematriation work. Collaborating with Indigenous communities is essential for effective teaching within these departments.
- 🌱 **Women's Studies** courses can use the film to examine the central role of Indigenous women in seed saving, weaving together Indigenous knowledge, botanical science, social analysis, traditional seed collection techniques, storytelling, historical trauma, and contemporary rematriation.



# Take Action

## Discussion Questions

- What did you learn about Indigenous seed-collecting, storing, and exchanging seeds?
- How can Indigenous seed-saving contribute to global food security, biodiversity, and climate change adaptation?
- Why are heirloom seeds valuable, both culturally and practically? How do they compare to GMO seeds?
- How did the forced displacement of Indigenous nations negatively affect their food systems including their traditional agricultural practices?
- What is Indigenous food sovereignty and why is it considered a fundamental right for Indigenous peoples?
- How has the commodification of seeds by large corporations threatened Indigenous food sovereignty and self-determination?
- What are some of the biggest obstacles facing Indigenous seed keepers?
- What is the significance of seed rematriation—returning seeds to their original territories and communities?
- How does this process contribute to healing and rebuilding?
- How are Angela, Becky, and Rowen ensuring that their knowledge and skills are passed down to future generations?

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## Collect Seeds

Learn about agrarian traditions of seed collecting, planting, harvesting, and eating as vibrant assertions of Native identity and community.

### Resources

- Seeds of Resilience: The Power of Native Seed Banks** is a collection of traditional crop varieties that are carefully cultivated by Indigenous peoples. These seed banks are important for preserving culture, promoting food security, and protecting biodiversity.
- Ukwakhwa (Our Foods)** is a nonprofit organization growing traditional, heirloom foods with an emphasis on Haudenosaunee varieties of corn, beans, and squash. We host a variety of events where the community comes to learn about planting, growing, harvesting, seed keeping, food preparation, food storage, and making traditional tools and crafts.

## Support Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Understand the health benefits and cultural importance of the Indigenous food sovereignty movement across the United States. Apply this new knowledge to support the work of rematriating seeds and Indigenous peoples safeguarding their seeds for future generations.



### Resources

- Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance (NAFSA)** is dedicated to restoring the food systems that support Indigenous self-determination, wellness, cultures, values, communities, economies, languages, and families while rebuilding relationships with the land, water, plants, and animals that sustain us.
- Braiding the Sacred** is a network of indigenous corn keepers that are assisting Indigenous Nations in Turtle Island by uniting them with sacred seeds and traditional food sources.
- Rematriation – Native-Seeds-Search** supports the return of seeds to a person or tribe with a direct relationship to those seeds based on seed collection information and without the expectation to share or return the seed in the future.



## Plant Heirloom Seeds

Heirloom seeds come from open-pollinated plants that pass on similar characteristics to the offspring plants. Depending on how they are grown, heirloom plants can be organic or non-organic.

### Resources

- Indigenous Seed Keepers Network** promotes Indigenous cultural diversity for future generations by collecting, growing, and sharing heirloom seeds and plants.
- Sierra Seeds** reconnects and rematriate seeds and humans back to the land, cultivating resilience that will allow us to thrive. We host a variety of events where the community comes to learn about planting, growing, harvesting, seed keeping, food preparation, food storage, and making traditional tools and crafts.