

## Anishinaabek People Work to Revive Traditional Agriculture

By Paula Carrick and Wanda Perron

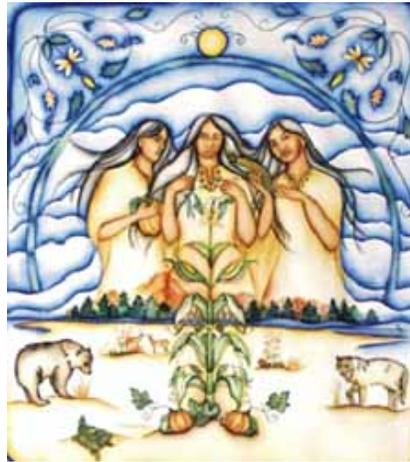
Our Ancestors depended upon Mother Earth locally to supply the food that sustained them. Our Ancestors were the original farmers of our area. Along with the harvesting of plants and animals from forests and waters, they planted, harvested, stored and consumed plants that were sown annually. The Ancestors, being wise, knew how to save the seeds from the best plants for planting the following year. Corn, squash, beans, pumpkins, sunflowers were just some of the plants that were being grown in our area prior to the Europeans arriving.

Over the past 200 years-plus, the lifestyle changes that have occurred among the Anishinaabek Community have contributed to the high incidence of such disabling diseases as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. This includes the loss of those traditional plants that kept us healthy. The close relationship with Mother Earth also has been greatly diminished. Our people knew the value of the food produced from the Earth Mother. We knew what to plant, where to plant, when to plant, how to harvest and how to prepare the crops that were best for our health and that of our children.

It is with this interest that the Bay Mills Indian Community would like to ask for our community members to examine the desire and the values of working toward a garden (Gitigaan) program again. The health benefits of a Gitigaan program could be reestablished in a traditional fashion for our community.

Some of the benefits of a successful Gitigaan program are:

- Healthy food will again be produced for use in the community.
- Healthy eating will be advanced.
- Reduction in future persons getting diabetes.
- Knowledge will be passed down to our children for generations to come.



— Possibly a return to heritage seeds that provided nutrients not found in modern vegetable production.

— Reestablishment of gardening knowledge to American Indian tradition will be achieved.

— Natural resources will be strongly portrayed as part of the tribe's traditional beliefs.

— Elders and youth will have occasion to talk with each other.

— The community may more strongly support educational programs.

— Native students will be better prepared for furthering their education since they will be in better touch with the wonders of what the Earth provides.

— Community will produce students with science-based education, natural resources, health, therapists, biologists, research specialists, etc.

— Tribe will have their own people as natural resource leaders available to guide them into the future.

— Tribal community will have better natural resource tools available to help deal with land use, water quality and other environmental issues (GIS, testing facilities, map resources).

— There will be more community members interested and available for science-based jobs and leadership roles in tribal programs, USDA and other natural resource organizations.

— This system has been used by many tribes as a successful drug and alcohol rehab program. Getting in touch with our Earth Mother creates a balance and life-giving energy.

Miigwech.

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