

NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota Forest Service

River Tribes were displaced from the Missouri River bottomlands with the creation of dams in the 1940s for flood control and hydropower. In North Dakota, Standing Rock Indian Reservation is working to re-establish community gardens and to plant fruit-bearing trees and shrubs to restore access to healthy foods. Living snow fences help keep roads passable during snowy winters.

Imagine being swept from your home and your way of life. Generations ago - in the interest of normalizing the Indigenous peoples of the newly forming United States - Native Americans were forced onto designated reservations. More recently, River Tribes were displaced from the Missouri River bottomlands with the creation of six dams in the 1940s. More than 300,000 acres of tribal land were lost – along with the riparian resources that were used for fuel, food, and wood to build homes. Gone were the productive community gardens grown in the fertile river bottomlands and native medicinal plants. Elders speak of the beautiful landscape and scenery that was destroyed and recall the once-abundant cottonwoods, which depend on the river's flood pulses to regenerate.

Relocated to the higher ground of the prairies, livestock, homes, and residents are subject to harsh elements of the Northern Plains. The North Dakota Forest Service is engaged in a new series of listening sessions to hear the needs of the vast collective community of Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Carefully placed living snow fences help protect roads from snow deposition, but many of these plantings have deteriorated and are being assessed for renovation. Community gardens in the communities of Cannonball and Porcupine are supported with an Extension-based program, “Nutrition for the

Elderly.” There is interest in supplementing these gardens with native fruiting trees and shrubs, like chokecherry, juneberry, plum, and buffaloberry. Powwow celebrations are culturally significant social gatherings that bond communities, and there is a desire to plant native trees to provide shade for powwow spectators.

Communities of Standing Rock Indian Reservation are among the most underserved communities in the state. They deserve thoughtful attention and assistance to restore the physical, mental, spiritual, and environmental health of this rich culture.



(Above) As depicted on this Community Garden sign, the native culture respects the environment as well as community members. "Be organic. No chemicals. Have respect for others' hard work." Photo: ND State Historical Society



(Left) Women working in Poor Dog Garden. Community gardens were moved from the fertile Missouri River bottomlands to the higher prairie in the 1940s. Photo: ND State Historical Society