

First meeting of indigenous peoples held in Omaha towards food

BY KARLHA VELÁSQUEZ

Omaha hosted the first Meeting of Indigenous Peoples on August 9, 2022 – to celebrate the International day of indigenous communities established by the United Nations Organization – in which highlighted the need to promote food sovereignty of the ancestral communities that have been affected by multinationals and historical segregation.

The event organized by the Pixan Ixim Mayan community began with a traditional Mayan dance and then gave way to a discussion that brought together more than 16 experts in food sovereignty and indigenous peoples in the conference room of the Metropolitan Community College.

On the topic of the status of indigenous peoples, sovereignty, and environmental justice, Dr. Anabel Ford, director of the El Pilar program and the Center for Mesoamerican Studies at the University of California, highlighted the need to become aware of the health of the new indigenous generations that have had to modify their lifestyle and move away from their way of eating and caring for themselves.

She also mentioned the medications for certain pathologies that considerably affect our system.

On his part, Timothy Rhodd, from the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska program, mentioned that one of the alternatives to preserve the planet is through bees, which is why he highlighted the

loway Bee Farm beekeeping program; in addition to the production of soybeans and hemp, which takes place in the loway Tribal National Park.

Meanwhile, Vernon Miller, director of the indigenous center at Tufts University, also highlighted the need to reconnect with nature, since indigenous youth are moving away from their ancestors and customs that strengthen indigenous identity.

Narciso Torres, Cynthia Ellis, and Felicitá Cantun were present as international guests from the Belize Mayan community.

Between the speeches, Ellis spoke up and highlighted that she is the mother of 5 children and grandmother of 17 grandchildren. "I have passed on my knowledge to them about the Mayans in Belize and their importance to the community and new generations, my question is how can we pass that on to new generations?" she said.

She added that English is always

used to transmit messages that do not reach the indigenous peoples, so the representation is not as present as it is said. She mentioned that the university studies that focus on indigenous studies should integrate more indigenous people who know more about their own origins. Cantun spoke about the need to give women participation and representation as the central pillar of families, while Torres commented in a conversation with El Perico about her project to reforest hectares of land in Belize with medicinal and food plants to help combat malnutrition.

Other speakers discussed the Regenerate program that is carried out in the central states of the country. Among them is the artisanal processing of corn.

The event also tasted traditional Nebraska indigenous food made by chef Anthony Warrior, who belongs to the Nebraska community. For his presentation, he thanked and sang some songs to honor the guests.

The event ended at 5 pm with the delivery of Mayan awards by Luis Marcos, ambassador of the Pixan Ixim community.

The moderators were the director of External Alianzas MAIA, Martha Lidia, and the lawyer and director of the Omaha Permaculture organization, Dave Santos.

Other speakers were:

- Dr. Kristian Kintziger, professor in the department of health and environment at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.
- Lance Foster, director of The Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska.
- Mike Grant, director of the Omaha Nation Garden Project.
- Nick Hernandez, director of The Food Sovereignty Initiative.
- Aaron LaPointe, Senior Agribusiness manager, Ho-Chunk Farms Inc.
- Regina Clemente, director of the Western Rural & Plains States Project at Movement Voter Project.
- Laura Contreras, Manager of the Omaha Community Foundation.
- Dr. Stephen Cornell, Co-founder, Co-director of The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development.
- Lance Morgan, president of Ho Chunk Farms, Inc.
- Tony Vargas, Senator of the Nebraska Legislature and candidate for the United States Congress.
- Luis Marcos, executive director of the Pixan Ixim Maya community, and ambassador for the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa.

