

## GATHER

Sanjay Rawal's documentary, *Gather*, highlights indigenous Americans' lives and how they have fought for their land and way of life ever since colonial settlement. From the dry and golden pastures that used to thrive in fields of green to the very few buffalo they have left, indigenous people have been working each passing day to restore what once was. The audience gets an inside look at life on the reservation and indigenous life outside of the reservation. Viewers learn how indigenous folks participate in food sovereignty to control the foods circulated and distributed through the reservation. The documentary also focuses on the heavy impact that the industrialization of food caused. This paper will expand on the topics covered in the film and the blatant use of pathos and logos that show how we have been brainwashed in understanding the relationship between indigenous peoples and colonists. We can also see the evidence supporting the claims that industrialized food and food genocide tore down indigenous communities through small chunks of ethos. They note, "Over 60 million American buffalo were slaughtered and put to waste to starve the Plains Indians into submission." Natives fell subject to eating industrialized foods or surrendering to starvation. This industrialized food would then prove to be the direct cause of diabetes among people in reservations. Viewers will also see how Northern Californian tribes are fighting to remove the Lower Klamath river dam. Without its removal, the critically endangered salmon that utilize the river will perish, leaving natives with another food

source—lost. There is a visible spike in depression, drug/alcohol abuse, suicides, and diabetes through all of this loss and what they turn up with in the end. These downsides to the dam are why they are fighting for their way of life because they live happier and healthier lives when connected to the land they inhabit. Through what settlers had done to the buffalo and subsequently the natives that lived off of the natural surroundings, it is clear that colonists had no intention of sustaining any peace with the indigenous people of America.

Gather follows several direct indigenous descendants on different journeys with a common goal, to restore native life to what it used to be and maybe even change the world a bit. We follow them on their separate paths through heavy pathos and logos—and a sprinkle of ethos. We see a man educating other natives on food sovereignty, a woman educating others on living off the land and how they can improve the health and wellbeing of community members. As well as a young girl who wants to use her STEM skills to aid in the population size of American buffalo and a group of young indigenous boys trying to bring balance back to native life. Even after all these beautiful people, there are still more as we also follow a man who wants to bring indigenous dishes that are simple and made from scratch to a customer's table.

The audience is hit with a lethal dose of pathos when we hear Twila Cassadore's testimony for an audience of indigenous people. She shares that she was sexually assaulted before school, near the river by her house, by her babysitter's boyfriend. She

carried this weight with her for forty years and struggled through addiction. When Cassadore finally recovered and was clean, she began foraging for food. Whether it be fruits, veggies, or meat, she would harvest and feel a sense of healing. Now, she takes groups of over-worked women and young children to participate in these activities, and she can see the change in behavior that each person exhibits. Hunting and harvesting allowed them to be free and one with the surrounding land and learn traditions to pass down later and keep alive. With Elsie DuBray, we see a deep passion for buffalo restoration rooted in her cultural and familial history. They show a photo of the sixty million buffalo that were “slaughtered to starve the Plains Indians into submission.” They were slaughtered to remove a significant indigenous food source and make more room for the cows that settlers were producing. DuBray uses her scientific testing skills to test the differences between cow beef and buffalo beef. When we see her on the plains watching the buffalo, she says, “I love the noises they make ... it kinda just makes you realize that you’re not all that big of a deal.” She displays her passion for these creatures through her appreciation and respect for their existence. She knows that the land was meant for the buffalo, yet they were wiped out with 90% of the indigenous population.

There are little bits of ethos throughout this pathos and logos-filled documentary, but they are critical when understanding the relationship between settlers and indigenous people. Before continuing to Samuel Gensaw, let’s talk more

about Elsie DuBray. She notes that buffalo, as opposed to cows, know where to find medicinal plants to heal any ailments they may be suffering from, making for healthier meat to consume. By separating "... the lipids from the different types of meat and performing thin layer chromatography..." She was able to show that grain-fed beef possessed the most "bad" fats and grass-fed buffalo possessed the least "bad" fats. Of course, the buffalo had the most "good" fats like omega-3 and omega-6 and was low in saturated fats (high in cows), leading to diabetes. "You should totally be eating it!" She says. We also follow Samuel Gensaw, an indigenous youth leader who works with at-risk youths. Bringing them on fishing expeditions teaches them to live off the land and respect its inhabitants while respecting and thanking the land. As they follow the river one day, they cannot come up with any fresh fish. Part of this problem is due to the Lower Klamath River dam preventing a proper flow for the salmon to thrive. The fight to "Un-Dam the Klamath" has prospered for over twenty years. However, it gained attention in 2002, when a total of salmon exceeding 30,000 died in attempts to spawn upriver.

To conclude, through the past and present injustices, indigenous people have been at the brunt of it all, simply fighting for their way of life. Most mental and physical illnesses within reservations can be directly linked to the industrialization of the food system. Industrialization consequently reduces the wildlife population, leading to the downfall of the surrounding ecosystem. It is also known that buffalo are

ideal for grazing rather than cows because buffalo possess better fats and can track down medicinal plants that filter through them during digestion, embedding a healing component. There are clear signs that the indigenous way of life is healthier and helps bring others together, but the selfish ideals of the colonists destroyed almost any trace of that way of life. Allowing natives to sustain their way of life will help those communities, and surrounding ecosystems thrive. It may also lead us in the right direction to maintain the health of our planet.

### Works Cited

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