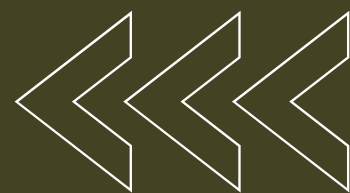
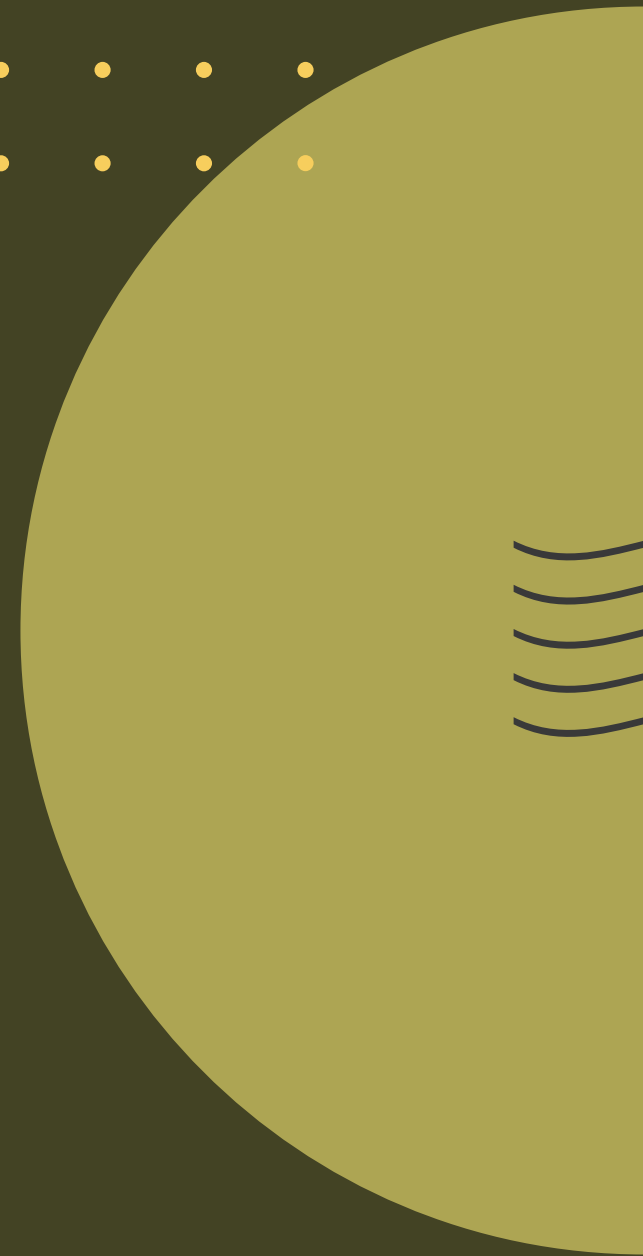


FEEDING THE FUTURE

Tribal Food Sovereignty for the Quapaw
Nation

By: Sarah Wood, Citizen of the Cherokee Nation

What Is Tribal Food Sovereignty?





TRIBAL FOOD SOVEREIGNTY:

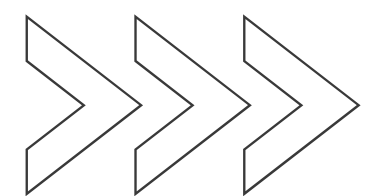
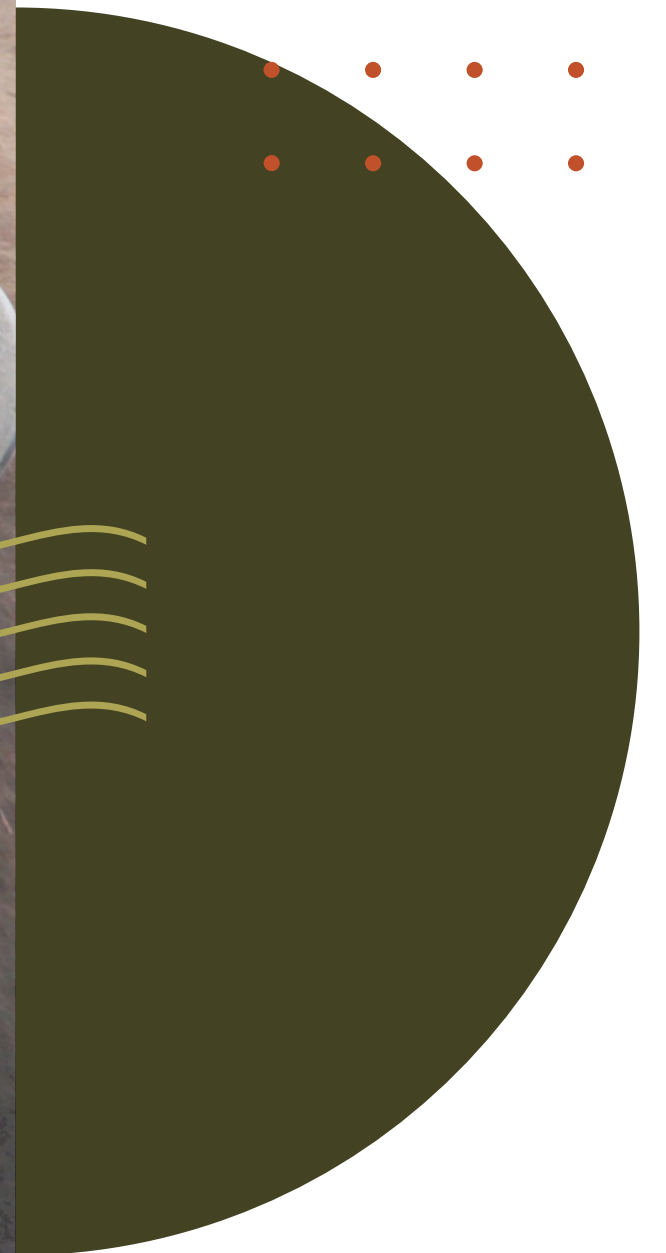
“Food sovereignty goes well beyond ensuring that people have enough food to meet their physical needs. It asserts that people must reclaim their power in the food system by rebuilding the relationships between people and the land, and between food providers and those who eat.”

-U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance

The inherit right for indigenous nations to decide their own diets and create their own food systems that coincide with their spirituality, cultural values, practices and traditions

WHY DO WE NEED TRIBAL FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?

Food has always been at the center of Native American communities, it is what brings everyone together, through hardships and triumphs. Since colonizers first arrived, Native foods have been disturbed and the overall physical and spiritual health and well-being of Native peoples has declined drastically. Historically, colonizers targeted Native food sources when trying to relocate or exterminate Native Americans. They wiped out herds of bison until they were on the brink of extinction, they introduced invasive plant and animal species that disrupted the growth of traditional foods, and removed tribes away from their traditional food sources.



THE EFFECTS

Since Native Americans were removed from their traditional food sources and were assimilated to eat Euro-American diets, many developed diet-related illnesses such as diabetes, high-blood pressure, obesity, and cardio-vascular diseases. The introduction of commodity food on reservations created the infamous fry-bread. A survival food, fry-bread was a result of many Natives starving on reservations because they did not have their traditional foods or herds to follow, so the federal government supplied them with commodity food. The effects of Natives eating Euro-American diets and lack of access to healthy foods has led to many physical and mental health issues in Native communities. It has also created a disconnection of tribal members with their culture and leads to many developing addiction problems and suicide and crime rates rise.

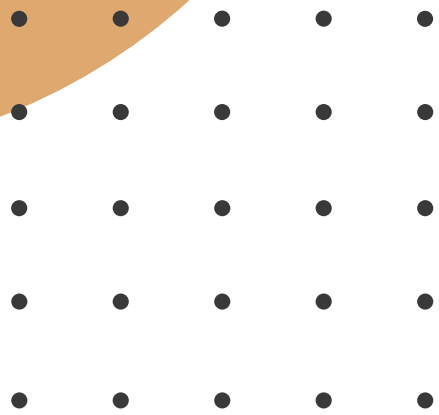
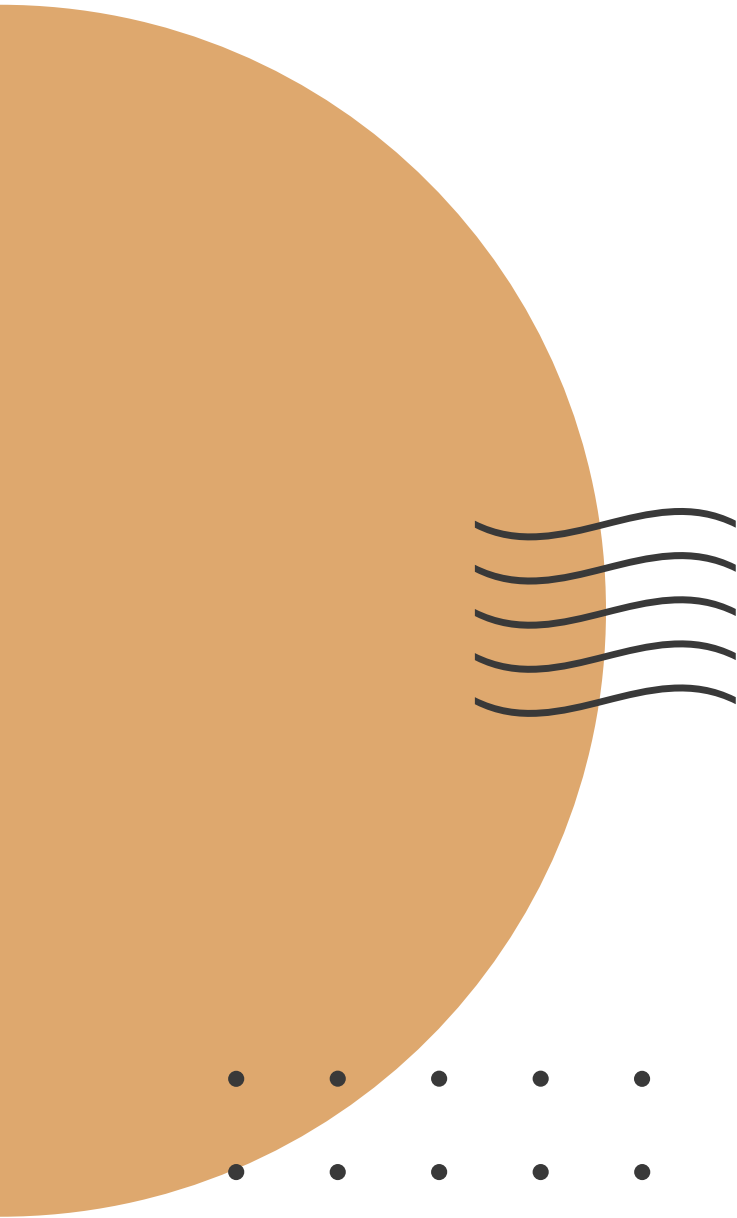
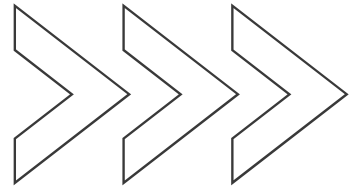


Four of the Quapaw tribe's six greenhouses

HOW DO WE FIX THIS?



Introducing food sovereignty initiatives is a popular and great way to combat the legacies of food insecurity within Native communities. Tribes have begun seed saving programs, farmer's markets, educational programs, traditional style restaurants, meat processing plants, repopulating bison herds, and many more things. Assimilation is the main factor for why so many Natives do not know their tribe's traditional diets and do not know how to grow and produce their own food. Educating, re-introducing, and accessibility to traditional foodways is the top three ways Native nations can become completely food sovereign.



The Quapaw Nation

“It was going back to our roots”

-Chris Roper, director of the Quapaw Tribe's Agriculture Department

QUAPAW TRADITIONAL FOODS

Pre-contact the Quapaw tribe grew beans, squash, gourds, corn, tobacco, and pumpkins. They gathered nuts, seeds, roots, and fruit. They hunted bear, deer, and bison. They seasonally hunted wild turkeys, fish, and waterfowl. Post-contact they grew melons and peaches and raised chickens. In the 1520s, Spanish explorer Hernan DeSoto recalled five miles of cultivated agriculture when he visited the O-Gah-Pah's, or the Quapaw tribe. He noted how their local food systems were thriving.





HISTORY OF THE QUAPAW NATION



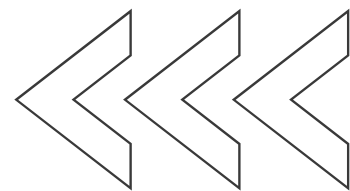
"Their life was with the land
and with the help of the land,
they fed themselves well"

-Maria Givens, The Daily Yonder



Pre-contact, the Quapaw tribe was migrant. They were at that time known as Dehiga Sioux. They migrated West out of the Ohio River Valley, until a large group of the tribe came upon the Mississippi River. A very dense fog came upon them as they attempted to cross the river, all holding onto a grapevine to stay secure. The vine then snapped in the middle of the river, forcing a group of them to float downstream. This group became known as the O-Gah-Pah tribe, the downstream people, or what we know them as today, the Quapaw tribe. They then settled near present day Pine Bluff, Arkansas. However, like many tribes in the South, the Quapaw's fell victim to relocation in Indian Territory. This also removed their healthy local food systems they had built and cultivated.

WHAT INITIATIVES HAS THE QUAPAW NATION IMPLEMENTED TODAY ?





INITIATIVES TAKEN

"IT'S NOT JUST FARM TO TABLE, IT'S SEED TO TABLE"

-Lucus Setterfield, Director of Food and Beverage for the Downstream Casino

Cattle Company: over 1,000 head of cattle; provides high quality beef, hormone and chemical-free.

Goat Program: over 100 goats; provides natural weed control.

Row Crops: over 2,000 acres of canola, corn, soy beans and wheat.

Meat Processing Plant: 25,000 sq. foot facility to process beef, bison, goat, lamb, pork and elk.

Smokehouse: located beside the meat processing plant. Turns the beef and bison processed into jerky and the pork into smoked bacon.

Greenhouses: six greenhouses that grow 21 varieties of herbs and vegetables and produces 8,000 lbs. of food a year.

Coffee Roasting Facility: this imports beans from other tribes around the world to create their own custom blends.

Beehives: 75 operating hives that supply the casino and other areas of the tribe.

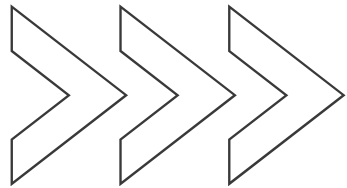
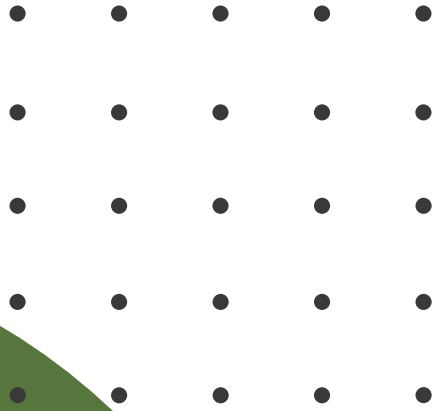
Farmers Market: started in 2019 after 90% of the tribe said they would attend a tribal led Farmer's Market. All food not grown locally is sold at cost to tribal members.

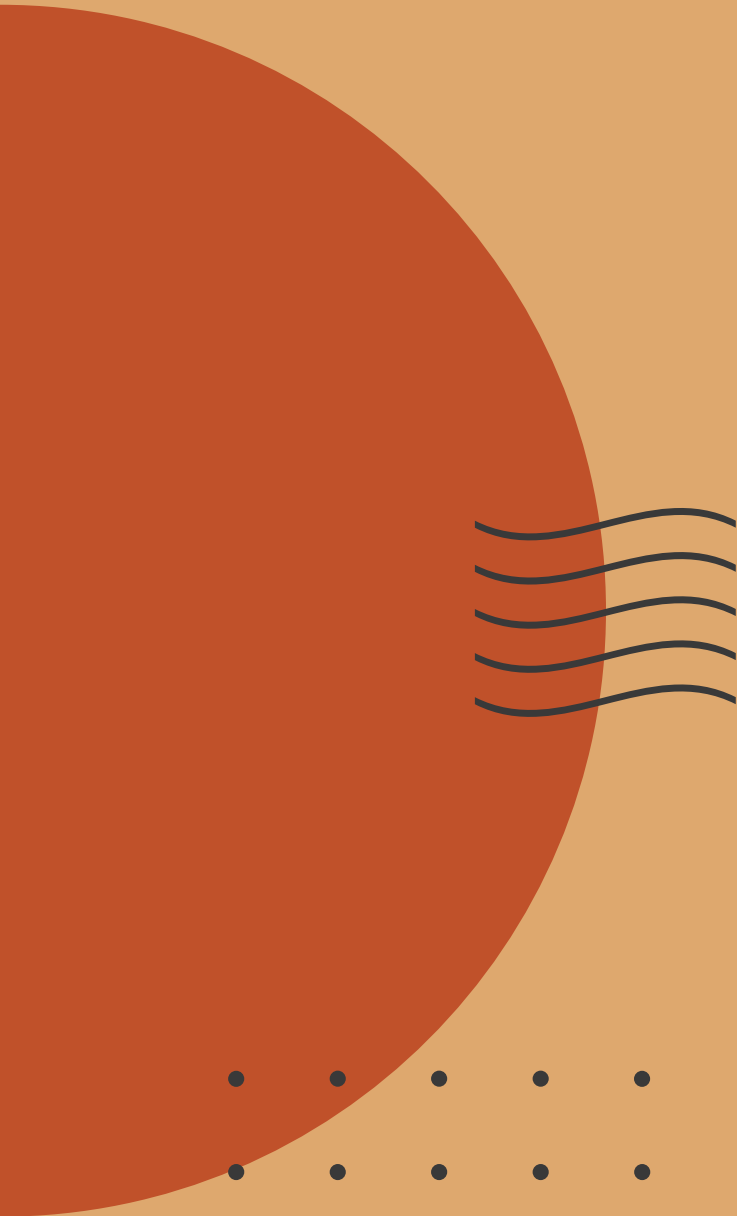
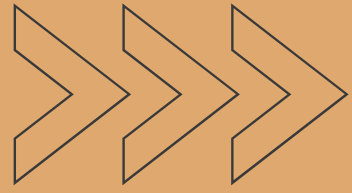
THE BENEFITS

The benefits reaped from each of these initiatives are incredible. Not only are they introducing traditional foodways back into their tribal community but they are also educating youth and other members about each facility and how the food is grown, processed, and eaten. They create hands on educational for every member to have the opportunity to learn and be apart of giving back to the tribe. The mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional impacts this creates is amazing. It decreases the rates of addiction, diet related illnesses, crime, and suicide because the people are happy and healthy. Happiness comes from the person being actively involved and engaged in their culture and connecting with other members within the tribe. The Quapaw Nation's casino is also reaping benefits from these initiatives. Most of the casino's food supply comes from the greenhouses and meat processing facility, which makes the cost of food a lot cheaper. They even grow hops to supply the bars at the casino as well as honey and coffee.



The Quapaw bison herd grazing near the raised beds at the greenhouses





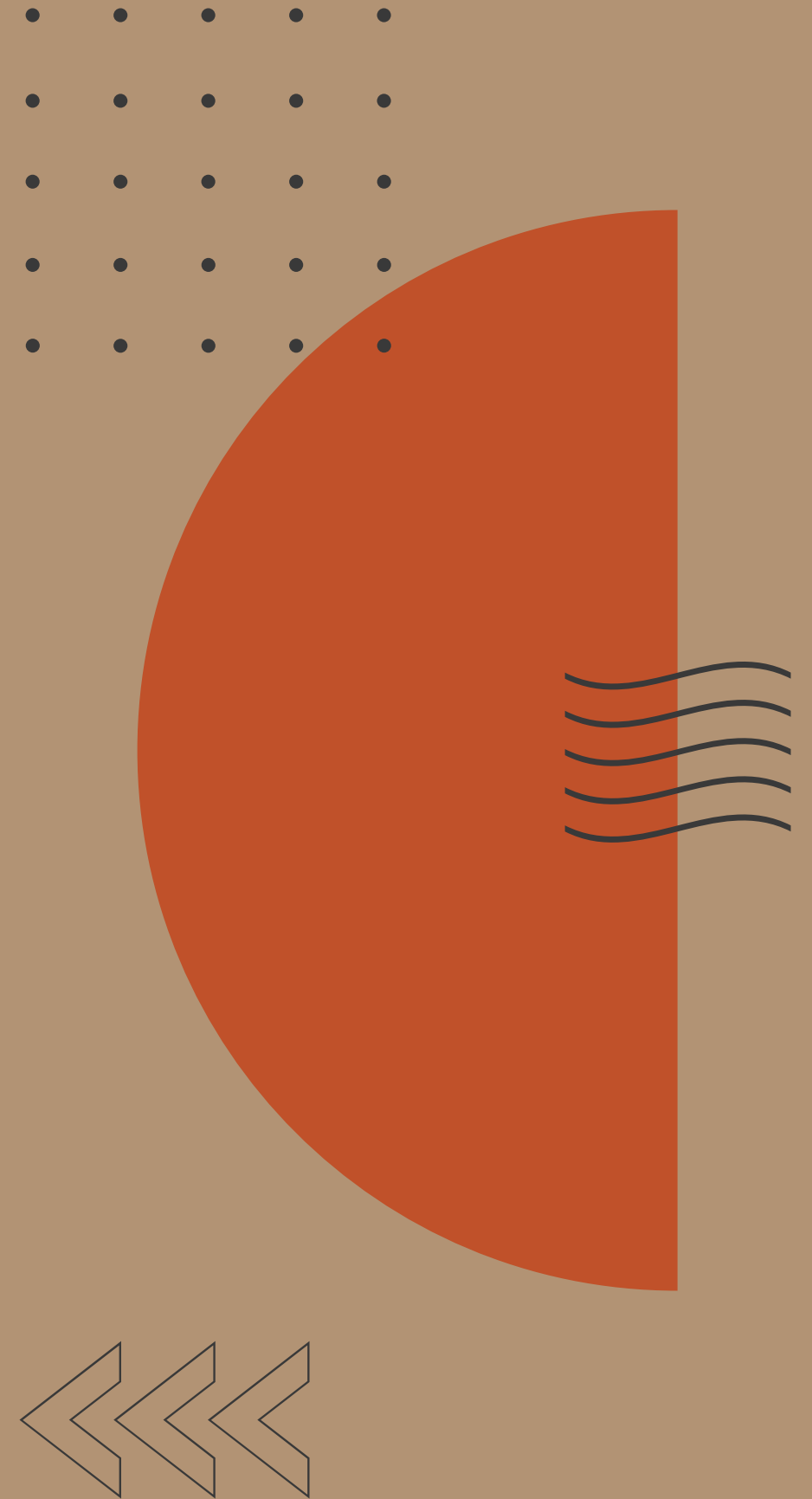
Progress

In the 1520s, Hernan DeSoto saw only 5 miles of cultivated agricultural land. In 2020, 500 years later, The Quapaw tribe has made immense progress after all the years of hardship and loss in between. They have a bison herd of 300, a cattle herd of 1,200, 6 greenhouses, 2,000 acres of row crops, one meat processing plant, one coffee company that produces 16 different roast varieties, one brewery that makes 5 different beers, and many connections between tribal members and their traditional food systems.

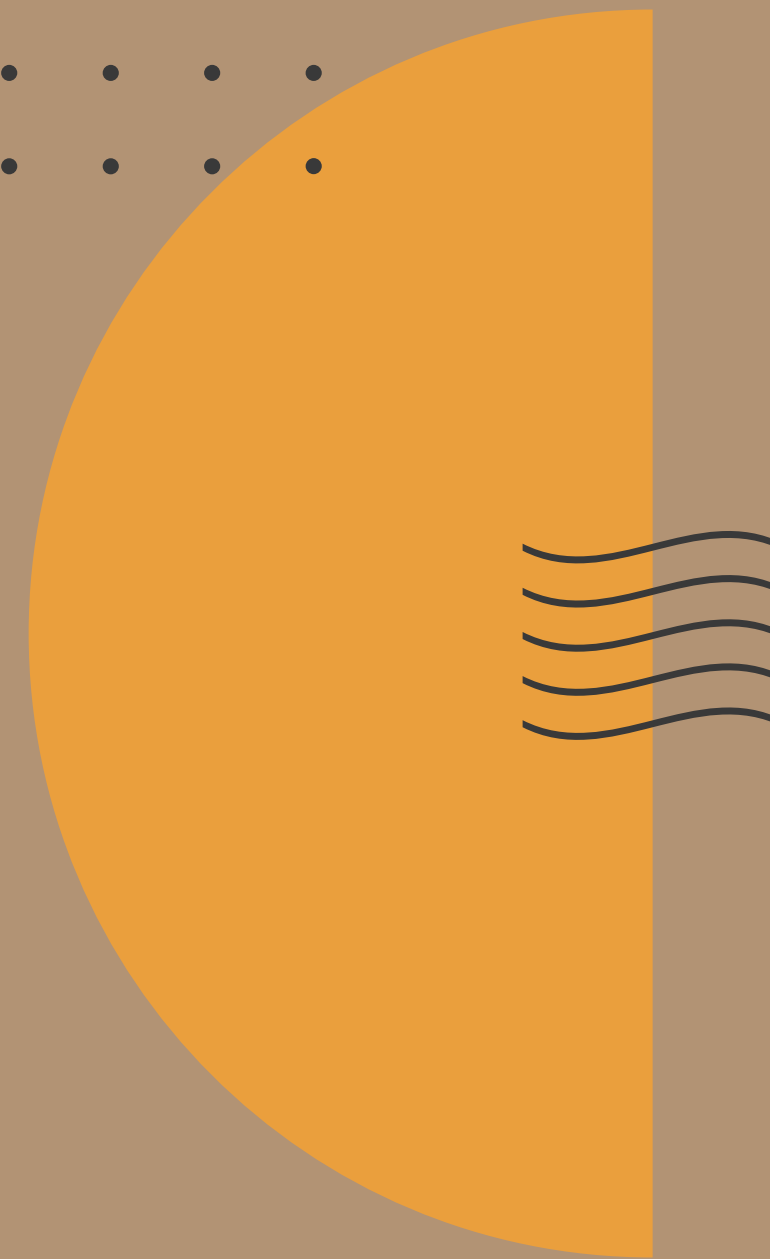
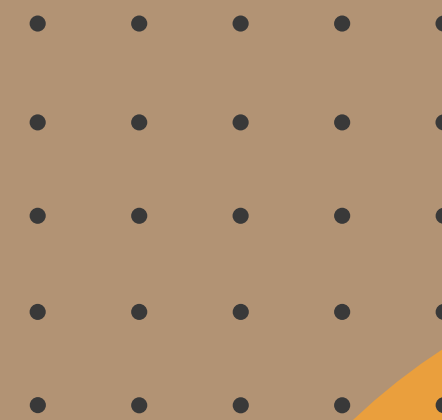


IN CONCLUSION

Historically, Native American food systems have been disproportionately affected at the hands of the federal government and non-Natives. Removal, relocation, boarding schools, the creation of reservations, as well as other factors disconnected Natives from their traditional foods. Today, many tribes have implemented food sovereignty and security initiatives to better progress their tribe to become completely food sovereign. They also implement these initiatives to restore their culture and empower themselves since food is vital to Native culture for survival as nutrition and medicine. The Quapaw Nation has made great strides to restore traditional ways and connect their community to decrease diet-related health and mental health issues. When Quapaw Chairman John Berrey was asked what's next for the tribe's food sovereignty initiatives, he responded with "expansion...acre by acre".



Ultimately,
the future of
traditional
foodways is
what we
make of it
today.





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