Illumine Presents
In association with Ager Meillier Films and First Nations Institute
A film by Sanjay Rawal

“GATHER”
74 min feature documentary

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Gather is an intimate portrait of a growing movement amongst Indigenous Americans to reclaim their spiritual and cultural identities through obtaining sovereignty over their ancestral food systems, while battling against the historical trauma brought on by centuries of genocide.

SYNOPSIS

Gather follows the stories of natives on the frontlines of a growing movement to reconnect with spiritual and cultural identities that were devastated by genocide. A indigenous chef embarks on a ambitious project to reclaim ancient food ways on the Apache reservation; in South Dakota a gifted Lakota high school student, raised on a buffalo ranch, is proving her tribes native wisdom through her passion for science; and a group of young men of the Yurok tribe in Northern California are struggling to keep their culture alive and rehabilitate the habitat of their sacred salmon.

All these stories combine to show how the reclaiming and recovery of ancient food ways is a way forward for native Americans to bring back health and vitality to their people.
On the White Mountain Apache Reservation in Arizona, Nephi Craig, acclaimed chef and founder of the Native American Culinary Association, is attempting to establish a first-of-its-kind indigenous cafe where Apache chefs prepare Apache grown produce for Apache diners.

As a legacy of his foray into the high-paced world of fine dining and French cuisine, Nephi has personally had to battle addictive and violent behavior that destroyed his last marriage and threatened to estrange his son. Through this period of recovery, Nephi realizes the importance of reconnecting with his Apache identity through food.

A gifted 17-year old scientist, Elsie is taking a research project to the Regional Science Fair, analyzing the comparative health effects of eating a beef-based diet versus a traditional Lakota diet based on Buffalo.

Her father Fred has dedicated his life to bring the buffalo back to traditional lands. Fighting the powerful cattle industry has been an uphill battle though, and Elsie is performing research that directly threatens that industry. Despite this, Elsie holds steadfast in her unshakeable belief that Native wisdom and food practices can begin to heal the scourge of health disparities that plague Native communities.
In Northern California, Native tribes are in a crisis. Overfishing, dams and climate change have almost eliminated salmon populations vital to tribal food supplies and spiritual practices.

A ragtag group of teenage boys called "The Ancestral Guard", led by Sammy Gensaw of the Yurok Tribe, take it upon themselves to fight for their river and preserve their ancient practices.

With no jobs and a sick river, the boys struggle to keep their culture alive. However, their determination catalyzes their rise in the growing global communities of indigenous cultures fighting oppressive governments and corporations.

Twila is master forager, an elder and medicine woman of the San Carlos Apache tribe. Haunted by a childhood of abuse, Twila battled addiction until she discovered healing through her tribe’s ancestral ways of harvesting and foraging.

Now she is on a quest to help youth, introducing them to diets and foods that are foreign to western palates. As an example of this, Twila takes Mae, a 12 year old abandoned by her family, on a hunt of a traditional local delicacy - the gloscho - or a common "pack rat."
BACKGROUND

Centuries before Native North Americans encountered Christopher Columbus lost at
sea tens of thousands of miles from his destination, indigenous peoples lived in
harmony with the Land - cultivating and maintaining a thriving food system across the
entire Western Hemisphere.

In the early 1600s Europeans marked a push to settle the Americas. Unable to best
Natives through weaponry alone, Americans took to asymmetrical tactics – killing
women and children, inducing famine and demoralizing warriors. The most effective of
these tactics was the annihilation of food systems. This attempt at extermination
motivated not only military policy but social and political policy. It is by design that Indian
Country remains food insecure – dependent on the same ration system enacted to
settle Natives adjacent to Military Forts, freeing their ancestral lands for unabated
resource extraction.

The west was won by starving Indians and yoking them to government support – a
system which endures to this day.
PRODUCTION STYLE

The film is intimate and character-driven, focusing heavily on creating an emotional and intellectual flow so that the narratives seamlessly tie together.

The film is shot without talking-heads and instead woven together through a series of scenes based on traditional dramatic structure. The stories are not told through experts but the characters' journeys and carefully curated archival.

Capturing the natural beauty and the sharp contrast of poverty on the reservations was important for the filmmakers. The film is shot in 8K 2.39:1 on the RED Monstro and drones were used to set locations, albeit sparingly. Other specialty photography such as underwater has been used to enhance the viewers' experience of the surroundings.
DIRECTORS STATEMENT

I’m in a very privileged position as a non-indigenous director to make a film on Native American food sovereignty under the guidance of one of the most vaunted NGOs in Indian Country – First Nations Development Institute (FNDI). The access their relationships in Indian Country have afforded us allowed us to make a film on these vital issues with depth and nuance we never could have reached otherwise.

As it happens, I have a track-record working with and for various indigenous groups around the world which informed my ability on Gather to simply listen and be present in an observational manner – allowing our Native American characters to drive their own narratives. I worked in human rights for 20 years, some of which was spent running a foundation that funneled millions of dollars of support to water infrastructure projects of the Dogon (Mali) and the Samburu (Kenya). My first film, Food Chains, chronicled the rise of a group of tomato pickers in Florida who were displaced Oaxacan, Chiapan and Guatemalan indigenous. My last film, 3100: Run and Become, delved deeply into Navajo and Kalahari San Bushmen running traditions with rare access granted by elders themselves.

At the same time, I come from a family and tradition from India that vehemently and sometimes violently opposed the British colonization. While my experience of historical trauma is not analogous to Native Americans, I feel alignment in my approach to de-colonization of economics and my belief in human and civil rights.

It is with this perspective that I approached my role in Gather. My job was to listen and serve. I understood that my abilities are limited as a non-Native but, like in all my films, I relied on the subjects to drive the narrative. I took their lead, guidance and just trained the cameras on them in a way that would expose and honor their traditions.
PRODUCTION TEAM

Sanjay Rawal / Director
Sanjay spent 15 years working on human rights campaigns globally. Sanjay’s first feature, Food Chains (2014), was produced by Eva Longoria and Eric Schlosser with narration by Forest Whitaker. The film won numerous awards, was released theatrically in 40 cities by Screen Media and was acquired by Netflix. Sanjay’s second effort took a sharp turn into non-traditional filmmaking. Applying narrative cinematic technique, Sanjay directed a sweeping expedition film. 3100: Run And Become was released theatrically in the US in 20 markets last fall. Sanjay’s work has been supported by Ford, Bertha, BritDoc, Fledgling, 11th Hour Project, NoVo, and the Omidyar Network. His work has won an assortment of honors include a James Beard Media Award.

Tanya Meillier / Producer
In 2007, Tanya produced and edited her first feature documentary film, Obscene: A Portrait of Barney Rosset and Grove Press, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, played theatrically and acquired worldwide. In 2012 she produced the feature film Alias Ruby Blade: A Story of Love and Revolution, which premiered in competition at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival and was subsequently acquired by Netflix and Al Jazeera America. Alias Ruby Blade was awarded a prize for “Most Valuable Documentary of the Year” by the Cinema for Peace Foundation in 2014. More recently she produced the feature film “3100: Run and Become” which had a theatrical release in the summer of 2018.

Alex Meillier / Editor
Alex’s first feature documentary Obscene, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and broadcast on Sundance Channel U.S. Other professional credits include 3100: Run and Become (Editor), Amir Bar-Lev's Long Strange Trip (Add'l Editor), Alias Ruby Blade (Director), Michael Moore’s Capitalism: A Love Story (Editor), Born To Fly: Elizabeth Streb Vs. Gravity (Editor, Emmy award nominee), the HBO documentary Happy Birthday To A Beautiful Woman (Editor) and numerous commercial credits.

Renan Ozturk / Cinematographer
Renan Ozturk is a National Geographic photographer with an Instagram following of 800k+ and renowned for his stunning imagery of mountains and landscapes. He shot the award-winning feature doc Meru, in which he also starred, as well as Sherpa and Valley Of The Gods. He is a founding member of Camp 4 Collective.

Sterlin Harjo / Producer
Sterlin Harjo (Seminole, Muskogee). Sundance Fellow (2004). His first narrative short Good Night Irene premiered at Sundance 2005. His next 3 narrative features (as director) also had Sundance premieres and were distributed theatrically and now digitally.

Executive Producers: Mike Roberts (Tlingit), Ray Foxworth (Navajo), Adae Briones (Kiowa/Cochiti), Jackie Francke (Navajo), Jennifer Buffett, Wendy Schmidt, Christine Schantz.
Raye Zaragoza provided the original music for the film including the end credit track which was written for the film out of inspiration of the subject.

Raye is an award-winning singer-songwriter who carries an acoustic guitar and a message. Her quiet yet powerful song “In the River,” written in response to the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in North Dakota, garnered half a million video views, national media coverage, and a Global Music Award and Honesty Oscar. Her forthcoming sophomore LP recorded with Tucker Martine (The Decemberists, First Aid Kit) will be released in 2020.

Writing about social issues comes naturally to Raye. "As a woman of color in America, social issues are things you deal with and see every day of your life," she says. "I write about my experience and oftentimes my existence has been laced with injustice."

Raye’s debut album, Fight For You (independent, 2017), displays her compassion, dedication to justice and equality for all, and keen eye for the seemingly small daily moments that become our most meaningful memories. About the record, Raye says, “This album is about finding yourself and finding your voice. It’s about maturing and realizing that you can make a difference if you so choose.”

Raye performs her music all over the United States and Europe. Her music has been featured on Billboard, Popmatters, Earmilk, Democracy Now! and on numerous lists of the best modern-day protest songs, including those by Paste Magazine, What Culture, and Overblown. She has also performed live sessions for Paste, Daytrotter, and FNX.

Raye has spoken on panels at Bonnaroo and SXSW on topics ranging from preventing sexual violence to engaging her fanbase as an independent artist. She has toured in support of Dispatch, Nahko and Medicine for the People, Kiefer Sutherland, William Elliott Whitmore, Dar Williams, Donovan Woods, and many more.
Elise DuBray is now studying biochemistry as a undergraduate at Stanford University With a minor in Native American studies

Samuel Gensaw and the Ancestral Guard continue to advocate for the health of the Klamath and other rivers worldwide.

For more information on the movement for Indigenous Food Sovereignty, visit: www.nativefoodsystems.org

Featuring
Twila Cassadore  San Carlos Apache
Nephi Craig     White Mountain Apache
Elsie DuBray Cheyenne  River Sioux and MHA
Fred DuBray      Sioux and MHA
Samuel Gensaw III Yurok
Peter Gensaw     Yurok
Jon Luke Gensaw  Yurok
Clayton Harvey   White Mountain Apache
Margie May Bendle Stevens  San Carlos Apache

Cast in order of appearance
Leander Fall     White Mountain Apache
Kris Bergen      White Mountain Apache
Josh Severns     Yurok
Kristoffher Chee Diné/Navajo
Frank Lara       Yurok
Zecharaiah Gabel Yurok
Jaden "Weesh" Green Yurok
Chucky Carpenter Hupa
Michelle DuBray  Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation
LuAnne Lindskov
Beau DuBray      Cheyenne River Sioux and MHA
Jandi Craig       White Mountain Apache
Kaia Minzey      White Mountain Apache
Tawny Craig      White Mountain Apache
Uriah Cheng      Hupa
Nat Pennington
Emily Maheaux
Seth Pisk
Michael Henry Sr. White Mountain Apache
Leshana Sanchez  White Mountain Apache
Ari Craig        White Mountain Apache
Rowley Craig     White Mountain Apache
Danielle Hill   Mashpee/Wampanoag

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Sound Designer  Abby Savage
Dialog Editors  Jeff Hinton
Sound Editors  Emmett Ceglia & Jake Mittelman
Audio Post Facility  Red Hook Post

Voice Over Cast
Tracy Humphrey
   Fred Keeler
   Wally Fields

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   Chi-Hui Yang
   Chris Burkard
Danielle Vigil-Masten Hupa
   David Eckles
   Diana Cohn
   Diane Mattz
Dr. Raymond Cajete Rio Rancho Pueblo
   Dustin Martin Diné/Navajo
Ed Iron Cloud Pine Ridge Lakota
   Elizabeth Castle
   Emily Maheux
Emmanuel Vaughn Lee
   Forest Woodward
Freddie Briones Big Valley Pomo
   Gini Reticker
   Greta Caruso
Gensaw family Yurok
   Hannah Merriman
   Heather Rae
   Helen Siegel
Hester Dillon Cherokee
   Hillary Renick Sherwood Pomo
   James Johnson Tlingit
Jana Fisher
Janet Brown
Janet Mattz Yurok
Janie Hipp Chicksaw
Javier Kinney Yurok
Ian Tetzner
Joni Cooper
Julie Marshall
Karlene Hunter Pine Ridge Lakota
Keely Badger
Lekha Singh
Lindsay McCovey Hupa/Yurok/Chimariko
Lyda Kuth
Margaux “Moana” Meillier
Marva Jones Tolowa Dee-ni
Matthew Wheeland
Michael Roberts
Mike Cladoosby Swinomish
Minette Nelson
Naomi Starkman
Nick Hernandez Pine Ridge Lakota
Paul Wilson Karuk
Rana Lapine Mohawk
Randy Blauvelt
Romero Family Cochiti
Roxanne Swentzell Santa Clara Pueblo
Ryan Redcorn Osage
Sara Archambault
Sarah Bell
Seth Pilsk
Stephanie Stevens San Carlos Apache
Stephen Most
Sue Masten Yurok
Tania Morrison
Taylor Rees
Thomas Dunklin
Tricia Mosquino Cochiti
Vanessa Bowen Diné/Navajo
Vi Orcutt Hupa
Virginia Clarke
Shalitha Peaches
Wa'okiye Mani Pine Ridge Lakota

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Allie Hostler Hupa
Adam Sings in the Timber Crow
Chelsey Lugar Turtle Mountain Chippewa / Standing Rock Lakota
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Anders Ryman
Nat Pennington
University of Arizona, Arizona, Southwestern, & Borderlands Photograph Collection
Humbolt State University
Emily Maheaux
Mekko Harjo
Ndee Bikiyaa

UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library, C. Hart Merriam Collection of Native American Photographs
KIEM TV, Red Wood News
The Courier Journal
North Wind Picture Archives

Shot on Location on
White Mountain Apache Reservation
Yurok Reservation
Hoopa Valley Reservation
Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation
San Carlos Apache Reservation
Noyo River Pomo Land
Elem Indian Colony Reservation
Sherwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California
Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation
Mashpee Wampanoag Reservation
Music
Warrior
Composer: Raye Zaragoza
Performed by: Raye Zaragoza
Courtesy of: RAYEMUSIC

Red Moon High Tide
Composer: Raye Zaragoza
Co-writer Madison Malone
Performed by: Raye Zaragoza
Courtesy of: RAYEMUSIC

Mother We'll Meet Again
Composer: Raye Zaragoza
Co-writer Ben Wylen
Performed by: Raye Zaragoza
Courtesy of: RAYEMUSIC and RESTLESS YOUTH ENTERTAINMENT

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