

Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference  
Traverse City, Michigan  
January 22-24, 2015

I attended the Welcoming and Introduction to the conference. For the first session, I attended Re-Indigenizing Agriculture in Anishinaabe Akiing, The Great Lakes with Winona LaDuke as the presenter. She talked about bringing traditional native foods back to traditional people by empowering and educating the Native community to grow it themselves.

The keynote speaker was Gary Zimmer, co-founder of Midwestern BioAg. He focused on best practices in farming, including sustainability and improving soil.

The second session I attended was Introduction to AgroForestry Systems with Peter Bane. He talked about the integration and importance of permaculture in modern farming to increase yield. It is from him that I learned that 85% of plant pairings will have a positive effect on each other, 10% will have little to no effect and only 5% of plant pairings will harm each other. He also discussed the six forms of agroforestry and how they might be introduced and used on a farm. (I found his talk informational and educational and purchased one of his books.)

The third and final session I attended was Rooted in History: Antique Apples of Northwest Lower Michigan with Traci Cruz from Big Belly Farm. She talked about her efforts traveling around Michigan to find older apple trees, cataloguing their flavor profile and any information that property owners had on the history of the trees. Where possible, she collected cuttings to try to recreate these varieties. She also taught how to graft a cutting.

I also walked the Trade Show floor and spoke to Jeff McCabe from Nifty Hoops about his efforts to bring modular hoop houses to the masses.

Note: I also attended Winona LaDuke's talk at the Hagerty Center the night before the conference. I attended outside of my role as Tribal Councilor, as I was asked by the conference organizers to play Native American flute before her talk.

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