2022 Seed Keepers’ Project

For the past 150 years, since native American tribes were forcibly removed from their traditional homelands and resettled further and further west, they have safeguarded their sacred corn seed. Their hope was that someday they would be able to return home, to the lands where these sacred seeds evolved over thousands of years, and once again successfully grow their corn.

Corn is not only a food source for them, but also a sacred plant used in rituals of various kinds. Unfortunately, on the lands to which many tribes were relocated, their corn was unable to grow. Many first nations now have a “seed keeper” who continues to protect and preserve their remaining corn seed. Many are searching for people willing to try to grow their corn on land where it evolved, believing that this will be successful in providing corn for their people.

The land where our Wheaton Franciscan motherhouse is located was once occupied by the Potawatomi Nation. Just a little south of us, the land was home to the Kickapoo Nation. We have been able to contact a seed keeper of the Kickapoo who believes that their sacred red flint corn may be able to grow on our land. They have agreed to give us a small amount of their seeds to plant in a 25 x 25-foot plot of land. Ray Ward assisted in locating a spot that he believes is optimal for growing corn, just to the east of the entrance 5 parking lot. In late May, we blessed the land and planted the seeds. Covenant Companion Paige Samdal has volunteered to be in charge of planting and caring for the corn. If growing the Kickapoo red flint corn is successful, we will harvest and return all the corn to the Kickapoo tribe. We hope that God will bless us with a rich harvest and that this will lead to a deepening relationship with the Kickapoo and Potawatomi people, as we seek to build bridges of understanding, respect, and healing.