

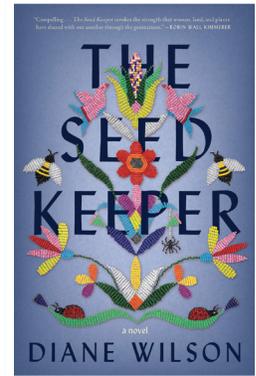
ONE BOOK — ONE COMMUNITY

# ONE READ

“The Seed Keeper” author Diane Wilson shared her thoughts in this email interview with The Library. Don’t miss her visit at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 13, at the Library Center.

**What event or aspects of your background, being a Mdewakanton descendent, inspired you to write this beautiful story?**

Wilson: “I first became involved with Indigenous seeds back in 2000 when I volunteered for a tiny garden called Dream of Wild Health. They had just begun growing out a collection of rare seeds that had been protected for many generations by various Native communities, yet the seeds were close to extinction from assimilation pressures.



As I’m also an avid gardener, I was fascinated by the history these seeds were carrying as well as their connection to traditional foods. After working with elders and farmers at Dream of Wild Health for many years, I wanted to tell a story about the incredible power and magic and beauty of seeds that have helped human beings survive for thousands of years.”

**“The Seed Keeper” is inspiring to many of us in the Ozarks who invest in community gardens and understand the importance of growing native plants and seed saving. We also read about the seed vault in Norway to preserve the world’s crop diversity. What is your sense of whether we are doing enough, and what more should we be doing to save seeds?**

Wilson: “After watching the movie, ‘Seeds: The Untold Story,’ I learned that 94% of the world’s seed varieties had already been lost by 2015, so I think the situation for seeds is critical. Especially since varieties like corn can be wind pollinated, which would damage the genetic integrity of the original seeds, while exposing the grower to lawsuits for ‘stealing’ patented material. I think we often take seeds for granted, buying them at big box stores that may have treated them with neonicotinoids that are harmful to pollinators. While seed vaults are important resources, especially when a country is hit by a devastating natural disaster, it’s essential that we remember that seeds are living beings who need to be grown out periodically to retain their viability. To me, the best way we protect our seeds is by purchasing organic, heirloom seeds, and buying food as much as possible through local, organic providers. Sharing seeds is also a great way to protect them while building community.”

**Rosalie and Gaby represent different but strong female characters who speak up about societal issues. Have you had women in your life like those divergent characters, and how did they affect your thinking or approach to things?**

Wilson: “Rosalie and Gaby represent two different pathways for working towards social change, specifically in the ways they choose to protect our seeds and water. Rosalie chooses to become a gardener and a Seed Keeper while Gaby becomes an outspoken activist and lawyer working to protect our water. These different paths are suited to the unique gifts and temperament of each woman, and require sacrifices as well. Both characters were inspired by strong women I’ve known through my work and family. What’s important to me is that we all use our gifts to make our communities stronger in whatever way we can.”

**There are so many lovely lines in the book that make the reader pause, re-read and think. What is one of your favorite lines, and what do you hope the reader will draw from it?**

Wilson: “Rather than choose a favorite line, I would like to call attention to the poem that opens the book, which is spoken by the seeds themselves. By introducing the seeds as a character, they remind the reader of the Original Agreement between human beings and seeds that allow both to survive by taking care of each other. In a way, the seeds are observing the story to see if human beings will find their way back to a relationship that is built on reciprocity.”

**Corporate agriculture has an effect on the main character and her community through genetically modified seeds and practices. It reads like a headline pulled from today’s news. Do you see changes in corporate agriculture that give you hope that we can coexist with both local and corporate agriculture?**

Wilson: “While I have a strong opinion about the direction of corporate agriculture and the reliance on genetically modified seeds, my intention in this book was to invite the reader to think about our changing relationship with seeds, from our early reliance thousands of years ago to current day. Changing our relationship has consequences for us as human beings and for the seeds themselves. In Dakota we have a saying, Mitakuye Owasin, which means We Are All Related. Are we still acting as good relatives to the seeds? I would invite the audience to think about the ways in which our relationship with seeds is mutually beneficial and sustainable for the long-term or next seven generations.”



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