

Posoh mawaw Niwak, nekatow manawich kikitem (Hello everyone, I am going to speak). My name is Marcus Grignon, and I am the Executive Director of Hempstead Project Heart, a non-profit organization dedicated to redeveloping thriving hemp economies that connect tribal, urban, and rural communities throughout the United States. Hempstead Project Heart is a member of the Rural Coalition, the Peace Development Fund, and the National Hemp Association's Standing Committee of Hemp Organizations. I've come before you today to testify on the USDA Hemp Production Program. I am also here for the American pioneers who pushed our country towards acceptance of hemp: Alex White Plume, Chris Boucher, Jack Herer, Barbara Filippone, and Richard Rose.

Hemp has a conflicting past in our country. From the founding of our nation and lead up to the passage of the Controlled Substances Act, hemp was considered a cash crop and useful for our military during World War II. After passage of the Controlled Substances Act, hemp became defined as a drug and non-useful. Both of which is untrue. The best way I've educated the American people over the last six years on the difference between hemp and marijuana is an analogy of the pepper family. With peppers you have habanero, chipotle, ghost pepper, jalapeno---these peppers is what I would call your "high-grade marijuana." Whereas green, yellow, and red bell peppers is what I would call your "hemp." Both peppers are part of the same family, but distinctly different.

The historical perspective of hemp played a large role in building our country during the early years of our democracy. Many states such as Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Virginia, and Wisconsin to name a few have rich histories of hemp playing a vital role in their economies. From 1902 to 1944, the USDA studied hemp extensively as a solution to our country's fiber shortage. Lyster Dewey led this research for USDA. Dewey with the help of Dr. Andrew Wright and Senator Alexander Wiley created the 20<sup>th</sup> century American hemp industry. Through their research, they uncovered: 1)  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the land in the United States can grow hemp; 2) Hemp grows well with crop rotations; 3) Hemp's long tap root penetrates the soil and loosens the undersoil layers; 4) Drying kilns for hemp fiber should not exceed 150 degrees Fahrenheit. There is a wealth of knowledge on how to produce and process hemp from these records at the National Agricultural Library.

My path as an American hemp farmer is not linear. I began my journey as a hemp researcher in 2015 for my tribal nation, the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, and the College of Menominee Nation, an institution of higher education. We grew hemp on our homelands for research purposes to spur economic development for our people under section 7606 of the 2014 Farm Bill and under guidance of the Department of Justice's Wilkensen Memorandum. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful due to federal overreach by the Drug Enforcement Agency's (DEA) raid on our hemp crop in October 2015. Under the auspices of a marijuana raid on tribal lands, the DEA took our hemp crop at harvest time that had seed with one year acclimation to the Great Lakes region. Even our topsoil was seized by a bulldozer. We never received test results from DEA to prove our hemp had tested over the legal limit.

After the 2015 growing season, I dedicated myself to be an education advocate and push for hemp to be legalized in Wisconsin and the United States through Hempstead Project Heart. As part of a coalition of Americans, we pushed for hemp to be legal again and were successful in Wisconsin in 2017. In 2018, our coalition focused on the 2018 Farm Bill to revise section 7606, make hemp fully legal in the United States, and uphold tribal sovereignty for the 574 tribal nations within our country to grow hemp without federal interference. We were successful and for the committee members I testify before today, I say Waewaenen (thank you) for your support.

The summer of 2019, hemp came back to the Menominee Reservation. Our research focused on integrated pest management in hemp production. We were able to identify various pests and pollinators during the growing season. It is truly amazing to observe the growing cycle of hemp and watch the tree frogs, bees, aphids, lady bugs, and Japanese beetles show up at different times. This research in 2019 laid the groundwork for our current research on the effects of Japanese beetles on hemp production through the USDA Sustainable Agriculture, Research, and Education program.

In 2020, the Native American Agriculture Fund, a foundation created by the Keepseagle settlement, awarded the College of Menominee Nation and Hempstead Project Heart a grant to develop a hemp fiber feasibility study and begin to acclimate a hemp fiber variety in the Great Lakes region. We are in our third and final year of research for this grant. The Chairman of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Ron Corn Sr., supports Hempstead Project Heart's efforts to spur hemp research, production, and product development on the Menominee Reservation.

As the 2023 Farm Bill is upon us, I want to advocate to strengthen the hemp production provisions from the 2018 Farm Bill. 1) There needs to be separation between the definition and regulation of industrial hemp from cannabinoid or floral hemp. These crops are easily differentiated with a visual inspection. The industry advocates for a grain and fiber exemption from testing and background checks for the producer; 2) bank regulations need revision to ease current restrictions for hemp operations. It is difficult to find a bank that will take business accounts connected to hemp production and processing; 3) There needs to be a USDA stamp of approval for hemp being shipped between the various jurisdictions in the United States. This will help with any issues that arise with interstate commerce. While these suggestions do not cover all the needed changes, these top three will enhance the American hemp industry, ease burdensome regulations for farmers, and create more demand for hemp made materials.

The reemergence of the hemp industry is a renewal of our American traditions. Our country prospered on the production of hemp, and we can do it again. Today, many Americans from all walks of life are at the forefront of rebuilding the American hemp industry. Barbara Filippone and Summer Star Haeske of Envirotexiles, a successful USDA Bio-Preferred company that works on various hemp fiber products and supplies the fashion industry with high quality hemp textiles. Aaron Rydell and Greg Wilson of HempWood, a hemp building materials company that specializes in the first HempWood flooring. Mike McGuire of Western Fiber, who built a hemp processing plant by retrofitting a cotton gin. Ken Anderson and Colin Felton of Bast Fiber Products created composite decking made from hemp fiber. All these innovative American entrepreneurs need the support of Congress to grow the hemp industry in our country. We look forward to stronger hemp provisions in the 2023 Farm Bill.

As I wrap up my testimony today, I want to leave you all with a historical perspective by Lyster Dewey. In 1939, Dewey wrote in a report to the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry, "The future of the hemp industry in this country seems to depend largely on the development of strains/varieties of hemp free from marijuana." Dewey knew in 1939 America would need to develop their own hemp varieties to grow the industry and not depend on international seed supplies. The 2023 Farm Bill is our opportunity to ease restrictions, spur economic development in our communities, and innovate the products we need to fill the gaps in our supply chains. I ask Congress to strengthen the hemp provisions in the 2023 Farm Bill to open the door for creativity and innovation to propel the American hemp industry into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Waewaenen (Thank you) for your time and yield the floor.

# Marcus Grignon

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## Education

### **University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, BA**

Major: Democracy and Justice Studies, minor First Nations Studies; January 2015-May 2016

### **College of Menominee Nation, AA, AAS**

Major: Tribal Law and Sustainable Development; August 2006-May 2010

### **The George Washington University, Certificate**

Major: Political Management and Lobbying; January 2009 – April 2009

### **American University, Certificate**

Major: Federal Budget and Tribal Economic Development; January 2011-April 2011

### **Institute of American Indian Arts, Certificate**

Major: Indigenous Business and Entrepreneurship; August 2012-May 2014

## Employment

### **NiiJii Capital Partners, Incorporated**, Lending and Technical Assistance Specialist (March 2020-Present)

- Provide one-on-one technical assistance that includes, but not limited to business planning, financial projections, market analysis, market strategy, and strategic planning
- Manage and monitor loan portfolio under the direction of the Executive Director
- Developed an agricultural lending product for hemp producers

### **Indigenous Think Tank, LLC**, Principal (January 2020-Present)

- Consult tribes and small businesses on strategic planning in the hemp industry
- Research hemp growing conditions and economic trends
- Draft feasibility studies and hemp regulations

### **Hempstead Project Heart**, Executive Director (January 2020-Present)

- Collaborate with the College of Menominee Nation on hemp fiber research
- Research and write a feasibility study on hemp fiber production in the Great Lakes region
- Work on the development of a hemp fiber seed acclimated to the Great Lakes region

### **Earth Island Institute**, Hempstead Project Heart Project Director (December 2017-December 2019)

- Supervised two interns on working towards passage of the 2018 Farm Bill with Tribal Sovereignty upheld in industrial hemp provisions through grassroots organizing
- Collaborated with the Oneida Tribe on education campaign and economic development strategy for hemp
- Advise tribes and conduct feasibility studies on the potential for industrial hemp

### **Earth Island Institute**, Hempstead Project Heart Campaign Manager (March 2016-December 2017)

- Project management of a statewide/national campaign to legalize Industrial Hemp in Wisconsin and United States
- Educate tribal, urban, and rural communities on the benefits of growing industrial hemp
- Research historical record on hemp and economic development opportunities

### **Earthcare International**, Food Policy AmeriCorps Member (August 2011-August 2013)

- Conducted surveys and interviews on food access in Santa Fe County, New Mexico
- Built relationships with elected officials, food pantry staff, community leaders, and non-profits
- Wrote a community food assessment on food access for the Santa Fe Food Policy Council

### **Small Business Administration Office of Native American Affairs**, Staff Assistant (January 2011-May 2011)

- Researched and co-wrote a report to Congress on Rural Exporting in the United States
- Drafted Federal Register Notices and Statements of Work
- Worked with native small business owners on navigating through SBA's programs and loans

### **Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin**, MIEDA Economic Development Adviser (May 2010-August 2011)

- Oversaw economic development projects as a liaison between contractors and the Menominee Tribal Legislature on the Menominee Reservation
- Meet with elected officials, contractors, and federal employees to discuss economic development
- Wrote a feasibility study and business plan on a tribally controlled organic farm

### **U.S. Congress** Legislative Intern for Senator Debbie Stabenow (January 2009-May 2009)

- Attend hearings, briefings, drafted memos regarding current and future legislative proposals
- Answering phones and constituents' mail
- Running errands for the Senator and staff members; interacting with Congressional members and their staff

**Extracurricular Activities**

*National Hemp Association's Standing Committee of Hemp Organizations, Member (2021-Present)*

*Rural Coalition's Farm Bill Policy Committee, Member (2016-Present)*

# Truth in Testimony Disclosure Form

In accordance with Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5)\* of the *Rules of the House of Representatives*, witnesses are asked to disclose the following information. Please complete this form electronically by filling in the provided blanks.

Committee: Agriculture

Subcommittee: Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research

Hearing Date: 07/28/2022

Hearing Title :

"An Examination of the USDA's Hemp Production Program"

Witness Name: Marcus Grignon

Position/Title: Executive Director

Witness Type: ☐ Governmental ☒ Non-governmental

Are you representing yourself or an organization? ☐ Self ☒ Organization

If you are representing an organization, please list what entity or entities you are representing:

Hempstead Project Heart

## **FOR WITNESSES APPEARING IN A NON-GOVERNMENTAL CAPACITY**

Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.

Are you a fiduciary—including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent—of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing? If so, please list the name of the organization(s) or entities.

Yes, Hempstead Project Heart

**Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) related to the hearing's subject matter that you, the organization(s) you represent, or entities for which you serve as a fiduciary have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.**

United States Department of Agriculture Sustainable Agriculture, Research, and Education  
\$9,000.00  
Keepseagle Settlement-Native American Agriculture Fund \$85,800.00

**Please list any contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government and related to the hearing's subject that you, the organization(s) you represent, or entities for which you serve as a fiduciary have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the amount and country of origin of each contract or payment.**

N/A

**Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.**

- ☒ I have attached a written statement of proposed testimony.
- ☒ I have attached my curriculum vitae or biography.

\* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5), of the U.S. House of Representatives provides:

(5)(A) Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof.

(B) In the case of a witness appearing in a non-governmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include— (i) a curriculum vitae; (ii) a disclosure of any Federal grants or contracts, or contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (iii) a disclosure of whether the witness is a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing.

(C) The disclosure referred to in subdivision (B)(iii) shall include— (i) the amount and source of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (ii) the amount and country of origin of any payment or contract related to the subject matter of the hearing originating with a foreign government.

(D) Such statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the privacy or security of the witness, shall be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness appears.