

The Pawnee left their villages each summer and winter to hunt buffalo. During the two month long winter hunt those unable to follow the buffalo herds traveled as far as Grand Island, Nebraska with village members. They remained there until the rest of the village returned from the hunt.

“The most important wild crop was the potato, known as *its*. The Loup River was known in Pawnee as Many-Potatoes, *Its-kari*, ‘potato-many,’ from the abundance of this useful vegetable that flourished along its banks. These grew in the sand among the willows. A considerable number of these Indian potatoes were boiled, smoked, and dried for preservation and stored in skin bags. In addition to the larger-size potatoes, they gathered some small ones that were strung along the vine; these were called potato-many-tied-up, *its-kari-piru*, and were given to the small children to eat after boiling. They were bundled up and tied with a vine into little bunches and boiled in water, covered with a layer of grass along with the larger ones. The larger potatoes were then peeled, “strung” on a very thin willow twig, and placed across two forked sticks in the tipi so that the smoke would permeate them and improve their flavor. The potatoes prepared in this way could be eaten at any time without further preparation, and would not rot.

“Quantities of potatoes were found on Grand Island and on both sides of the Republican River. Those who stayed on Grand Island, especially the old ladies, as well as any who went all the way out to the hunting grounds, would make sure to take a file along so that they could sharpen up their buffalo shoulder-blade ‘hoes’ to dig up the potatoes.”

#### Source Information

Title of Book: *The Lost Universe: Pawnee Life and Culture*

Anthropologist: Gene Weltfish

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