THE POTATO
A Brief History of an Incredible Tuber
THE ANDES – MOUNTAINS AND MICROCLIMATES
Friday, November 15th, 1532

- Francisco Pizzaro
- Late 1500's Potato introduced to Europe in Spain and British Isle
- Mainly used for animal feed and decoration
- By 1800's the potato was a staple in European cuisine (especially for the peasant class)
The potato conquest of the world

World conquering tuber from the Andean mountains

By the 1840s the potato was the only staple crop in Ireland, this led to disastrous consequences in the 1845 potato famine

The tuber spread through Europe in the 17th and 18th century, where it gradually became an important staple crop

Potatoes reached China in the 17th century; China is now the world's biggest potato producer with an annual yield of 75 million tonnes

Europeans planted the first potatoes in North America in the 18th century

Spanish conquerors of South America took the tuber back in the 16th century, mostly as a curiosity

Dutch traders introduced potatoes to South Africa in the 17th century

Potatoes had reached India by the 17th century most likely on Portuguese ships

Peru says the first potatoes were cultivated near Lake Titicaca on the Peru-Bolivia border, from around 4,000 BC, but now some Chileans are claiming a more southerly origin

Captain James Cook carried potatoes on his ship when he claimed Australia for Britain in 1770

Source: International Year of the Potato
Biodiversity vs Monoculture Production

South America

Europe
What Went Wrong? - Potato Famine 1845-1852
Potato Reproduction

True Seed

Cloning (Asexual Reproduction)
A Way Forward

- Indigenous Knowledge
- Biocultural Heritage
- Parque de la Papa
- Guardian Farmers
- Climate Change
- NASA
That's right, NASA is studying the Potato.

https://vimeo.com/216635756?ref=em-share
Discussion Questions:
Where are Potatoes From?
Climate/ Microclimates/ Andean Culture – what we know, how would this affect food production?
Science of the Potato
Wild vs. Cultivated varieties – Peruvian uses for potatoes
So what happened? How did we go from thousands to 12-?
Varieties?
Conquistatores and potatoes – boom in population, but then famine. What was missing?
Indigenous knowledge, biocultural heritage – define talk about relationship to NASA and Mars mission
Climate change! How do we learn from the lessons of the past and move into the future?