


Semi-annual report | October 2015 - March 2016

Seeds *of* Native Health
A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition



SeedsOfNativeHealth.org



On behalf of our tribal Community, we are pleased to share the most recent accomplishments of Seeds of Native Health, our campaign to improve Native American nutrition.

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) is fortunate to be working with great organizations and individuals, united in the goal of solving the food crisis in Indian Country.

Over the past six months, our re-granting partners, First Nations Development Institute and the Notah Begay III Foundation, have been nurturing important grassroots projects which hold localized promise with the hope for wider application and success. Because education and research are essential to addressing the problems of dietary health, we are pleased with the major projects now underway at the University of Minnesota and the University of Arkansas.

Our close partnership with the American Heart Association has been especially productive. We are working together on a national scale to gather the knowledge, focus and resources of other funders to make strategic investments in both the capacity and sovereign aspirations of Native peoples.

Because we are still in the early stages of our mission, we have been preparing new initiatives and exploring new partnerships, which we will announce in the months ahead.

"They're setting the bar high, and they're trying to effect change. That's the type of leadership we need to tackle this issue."

– Notah Begay III, Founder, Notah Begay III Foundation (Navano/San Felipe/Isleta Pueblo)



We invite you to learn more about Seeds of Native Health on these pages. Please join us in the essential work of reuniting indigenous peoples of our land to healthy food and prosperous lives.

SMSC Business Council

Chairman Charles R. Vig

Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson

Secretary/Treasurer Freedom Brewer

LORI K. WATSO: SEEDS OF NATIVE HEALTH CHAIR



For many years, Lori Watso has been a leading advocate for the SMSC's healthy foods initiatives, including the Wozupi Tribal Gardens and Mazopiya natural food store. She also has been a driving force behind the Seeds of Native Health campaign.

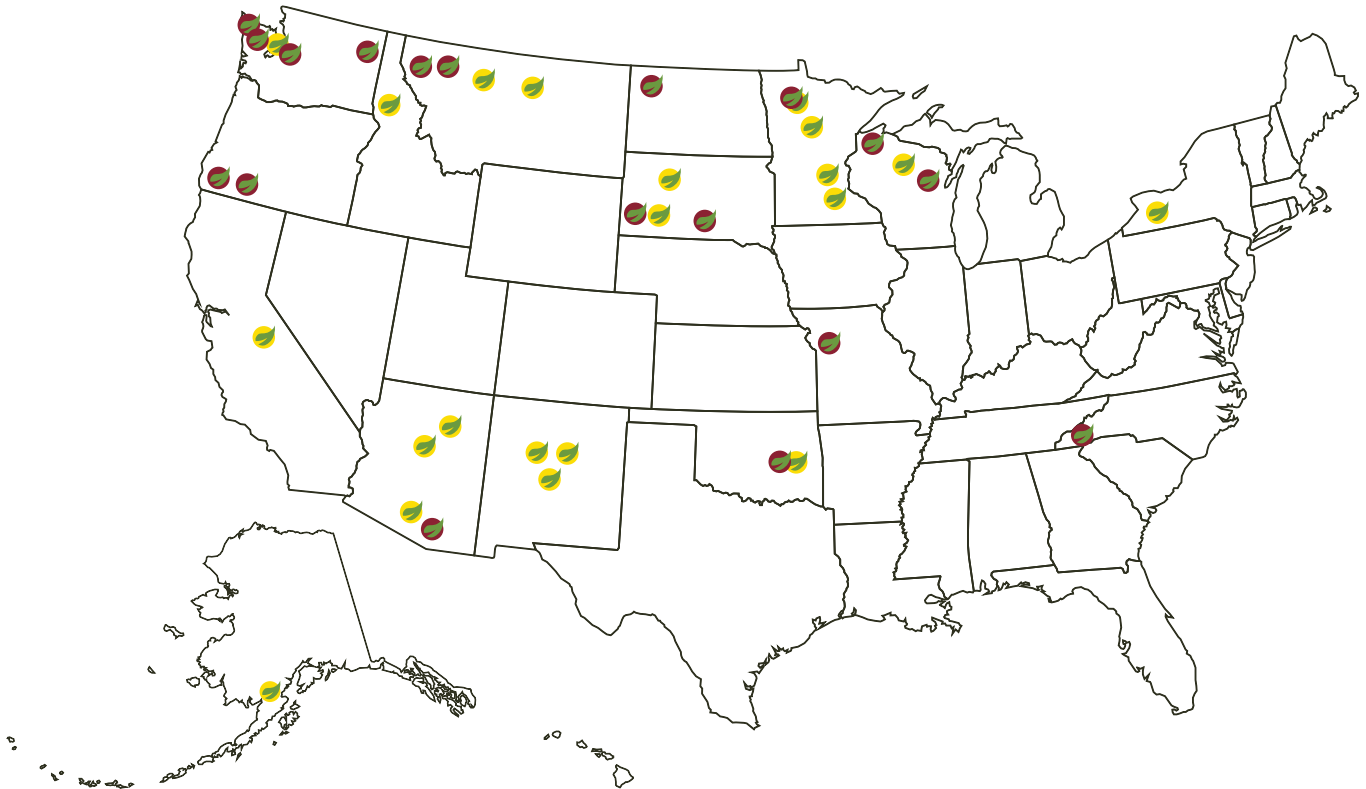
After retiring as SMSC Secretary/Treasurer in January, the Business Council appointed her as chair of Seeds of Native Health. In this capacity, she will continue to guide the campaign and serve as a spokesperson for the SMSC's efforts to improve Native American nutrition.



Grant-making for local efforts

Grant-making is a crucial aspect of Seeds of Native Health's work to support food research, education and access, as well as to build on existing localized efforts to solve the problems of Native American nutrition. Seeds of Native Health has partnered with First Nations Development Institute and the Notah Begay III Foundation to award \$2.5 million in grants and provide technical assistance.

-  New grantees
-  Previous grantees



"Indian Country is ripe for investment. Over the past four years, First Nations has received almost \$25 million in requests from Indian Country for grants related to food, diet and health. We have only been able to fund a little more than 7% of these requests. The fact that the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community has made this a priority, not only funded it, but started to bring other funders together around this issue ... gives a lot of credibility to both the Indian field of diet and health issues."

– Mike Roberts, President, First Nations Development Institute (Tlingit)

NEW GRANT RECIPIENTS (SINCE SEPTEMBER 2015)



American Indian Health Research and Education Alliance
(Kansas City, Kansas)
Community health assessment
\$20,000

Blackfeet Community College
(Browning, Montana)
Community health assessment
\$20,000

Cherokee Central Schools
(Cherokee, North Carolina)
Farm-to-school program
\$34,000

College of Menominee Nation
(Keshena, Wisconsin)
Food access and education
\$34,000

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
(Pablo, Montana)
Community garden and healthy food education
\$34,000

Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission
(Odanah, Wisconsin)
Traditional food education
\$30,000

Kalispel Tribe of Indians
(Usk, Washington)
Family gardens
\$28,000

Klamath Tribal Health & Family Services
(Klamath Falls, Oregon)
Community kitchen and food education
\$34,000

Mvskoke Creek Nation
(Okmulgee, Oklahoma)
Food safety
\$33,000

Nooksack Indian Tribe
(Deming, Washington)
Community garden
\$30,000

Northern California Tribal Court Coalition
(Talent, Oregon)
Food safety
\$34,000

Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College
(New Town, North Dakota)
Full Circle Nutrition Program
\$34,000

Oyate Teca Project
(Kyle, South Dakota)
Medicine Root Gardening Program
\$33,000

Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians
(Red Lake, Minnesota)
Community health assessment
\$20,000

Rosebud Economic Development Corporation
(Mission, South Dakota)
Food sovereignty assessment
\$20,000

Squaxin Island Tribe
(Shelton, Washington)
Community garden
\$32,000

Tucson Indian Center
(Tucson, Arizona)
Community health assessment
\$18,000

Urban Native Education Alliance
(Seattle, Washington)
Community health assessment
\$20,000

Engaging other funders to help improve Native nutrition

The Fertile Ground convening, October 14-15, 2015

The American Heart Association (AHA) and the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) co-convened a national gathering of 41 organizations on October 14-15 in Minneapolis. The conference was the first-ever effort to convene major funders to consider the critical needs and opportunities to improve Native American food access and nutritional health.

Participants developed findings and recommendations, and laid the basis for developing new strategies and programs to address the food crisis in Indian Country.

The AHA and SMSC issued a final report from the conference (which is available online at SeedsofNativeHealth.org/FertileGroundReport).

Important conclusions include:

- The lack of access to capital and credit for Native American food producers, communities and tribes and the subsequent underinvestment and underdevelopment of Indian Country are serious and fundamental challenges that must be prioritized.
- Culture is prevention. It is critical to recognize that Native cultural lifeways, traditions and languages are essential elements of successful strategies to improve the health and well-being of Native communities.



SMSC Chairman Charles R. Vig gives the AHA's Dr. Eduardo Sanchez a gift to symbolize the two organization's partnership. The beat of the hand-painted buffalo hide hand drum invokes the heartbeat of Mother Earth to help heal the sick.

“Fertile Ground was an historic breakthrough, moment for dozens of organizations seeking common ground to address nutrition and health across tribal nations. These families in Indian Country need our support, resources and expertise, and we’ve taken an important step in getting them on the path to improved health.”

- Nancy Brown, CEO,
American Heart Association

- The lack of quality and consistent health data on Native Americans is a serious problem. Increased investment in data collection led by Native communities is an important tool in developing effective strategies.
- Native youth must be a priority for investment to support their leadership development and engagement in creating community-driven solutions and policy change.

Following the conference, the AHA and SMSC conducted significant outreach to participating organizations to discuss ways to increase funder education, collaboration, engagement and investment in Native American food systems, nutrition, and health.



From left to right: SMSC Chairman Charles R. Vig; Jill Birnbaum, Voices for Healthy Kids executive director and the American Heart Association vice president; Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, American Heart Association’s Chief Medical Officer for Prevention; former SMSC Secretary/Treasurer Lori Watso; and SMSC Vice-Chairman Keith Anderson.

“Native Americans are sovereign peoples, but we cannot solve every problem on our own. That is why our tribe is committed to bringing together the best minds and organizations to find workable, long-term solutions.”

— Chairman Charles R. Vig, SMSC

National philanthropic roundtable deemed an “historic, breakthrough moment”

“I was deeply inspired by the expertise, enthusiasm, and sense of empowerment represented by those in attendance. Fertile Ground offered various entry points for us to engage, while challenging participants to envision new ideas and embrace an urgent call to action for healthier and more food-secure tribal communities.”

— Mia Hubbard,
Vice President of Programs,
MAZON: A Jewish
Response to Hunger

Fertile Ground brought a large group of philanthropic organizations together for the first time to consider the food crisis in Indian Country and ways to solve it.



“Fertile Ground was both educational and inspiring. I am excited about the future of this work and the change that can occur in Indian Country.”

— Jasmine Hall Ratliff, Program Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

“We need collaboration among all relevant players who support the building of strong access to healthy food systems in Indian Country. Creating pools of resources will be critical because ‘one-off’ projects don’t provide the comprehensive momentum we need to take this to the next level.”

— Janie Hipp, Director, Indigenous Food and Agriculture Project (Chickasaw Nation)



“Tribes and Native communities are operating within a unique and highly complex context of federal, state, county and tribal government policies. No other people deal with this multi-level policy entanglement. We need to support ways to come together and create policies and laws that can support sustainable change.”

– Judith Le Blanc, National Coordinator, Native Organizers Alliance (Cadelo Tribe of Oklahoma)



Judith Le Blanc, national coordinator for the Native Organizers Alliance, is a co-chair of the Fertile Ground II planning committee.

Encouraging new health and food policy in Native communities

Fertile Ground II scheduled for May 2-4, 2016

The success of the Fertile Ground convening in October 2015 has resulted in planning for another upcoming conference focused on Native-led food and health advocacy work within tribal communities. “Fertile Ground II” will be held on May 2-4, 2016, and bring together Native American leaders, Native youth advocates, and national philanthropic organizations to consider specific opportunities for policy changes in Indian Country.

The convening is a continuation of the SMSC’s and American Heart Association’s partnership to accelerate the development of a national framework to improve Native American nutrition and health.

For more information, visit bit.ly/FertileGroundII.



American
Heart
Association

Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation



TAKING ACTION TO PREVENT OBESITY



“Food and agriculture codes will be an invaluable guide for tribal leaders as they work to improve the health of their people.”

– Stacy Leeds, Dean and Professor of Law, University of Arkansas School of Law (Cherokee Nation)



Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative staff facilitate a roundtable in Las Vegas in November 2015.

Creating legal tools for tribal food sovereignty

Over the past six months, the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI) has made major progress with its Model Food and Agriculture Code Project. Its work over the next three years will produce statutory models for tribal governments’ use in their self-governance and self-determination activities to support, grow and protect their food systems. These food systems will in turn contribute to and support access to healthier foods and healthier food ecosystems in Indian Country, ultimately leading to improved nutritional health and wellness.

The SMSC’s leading gift in 2015 was joined by funding from MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger to launch the first of three phases of the project. Recently the Agua Fund, Inc. and the Farm Credit Council have joined as funders.

The project has received an overwhelmingly positive response from tribal governments. Through February 2016, IFAI has conducted 18 regional roundtables to discuss policy and legal challenges confronting tribes, with many more roundtables scheduled through the end of the year. The drafting team is scheduled to develop model language in a wide array of areas, and will work directly with 20 tribes in the process of writing preliminary codes.



Advancing Native American nutritional health research

In November 2015, the SMSC announced the details of its \$1 million Seeds of Native Health gift to the University of Minnesota. Three groundbreaking projects will make major contributions in the fields of nutritional science, public health, and food production.



A series of annual national conferences focused exclusively on Native American nutrition and food access, to be jointly convened by the university and the SMSC

The inaugural Annual Conference on Native Nutritional Health will be held September 26-27, 2016, at Mystic Lake Casino Hotel. This first-of-its-kind conference will bring together researchers and practitioners to discuss the current state of work and knowledge on Indigenous nutrition and food science, and identify needed areas of new work.

“When Indian Country lost its ability to feed itself, through whatever means, we lost that part of ourselves that supports our ability to thrive. It is only by regaining our foods that we will be able to restore our health, our resilience as peoples, and secure the stability and diversification within our own communities and local economies.”

– Janie Hipp, Director, Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (Chickasaw Nation)

“The SMSC has shown extraordinary leadership in raising awareness and providing the resources and vision to make a major contribution toward improving Native health and food access. Only a visionary benefactor like the SMSC is in the position to give life to the critical projects we are working on.”

– Brian Buhr, Dean,
University of Minnesota
College of Food,
Agricultural, and
Natural Resources
Sciences



A publicly accessible, comprehensive, multi-disciplinary bibliography relating to Native American nutrition and a publicly accessible, searchable database of leading experts in relevant fields

While many efforts are underway to improve indigenous nutrition and dietary health, much of the body of relevant knowledge is scattered and inaccessible to those working in and around Indian Country. The University of Minnesota will create useable, common repositories of information on American Indian nutrition and related fields. The bibliography and directory will be accessible to the public for free.



A study analyzing the obstacles between Western academic research and Native American traditional knowledge and experience relating to food and nutrition

In many cases, Western/scientific approaches give little or no serious and appropriate consideration to the many indigenous knowledge systems. The university’s study will address the benefits of more respectful cultural exchanges between Native American practitioners and agricultural, biomedical, and dietary researchers. It will explore culturally specific approaches to education, curricula and research in these fields.

"I am totally confident in the power of our youth. It is vital to build youth engagement on the ground and support their ongoing health and leadership for future efforts. These kids are working inter-tribally and instinctively, and are inspiring."

— Janie Hipp,
Director,
Indigenous Food and
Agriculture Initiative
(Chickasaw Nation)

Planning expansion of Native youth agriculture education


Improved nutritional health depends on Native communities determining their own food, health, and economic development destinies. Encouraging Native youth to become the next generation of producers and "food people" is essential.

The SMSC is working with the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative and the Intertribal Agriculture Council to convene a strategy conference on increasing agricultural education opportunities for Native youth.



*Native Youth in Agriculture
Summer Leadership Summit
at the University of Arkansas*

Photo credit: Elise Clote

A close-up photograph of a woven basket filled with fresh vegetables. Several bright orange carrots with green leafy tops are prominent in the center. To the left, there are green beans. In the foreground, two large, round, reddish-brown beets with their leafy tops are visible. The basket is made of light-colored woven material. The background is softly blurred, showing more greenery.

“Seeds of Native Health is clearly off to a strong start, but broader support is needed to sustain this important public health campaign’s momentum. The other philanthropies shouldn’t hesitate to join the campaign. This is an overdue public health need, one long neglected by the federal government, and a worthy use of these organizations’ resources.”

– *Star Tribune* editorial, September 15, 2015

“One tribe has heeded a call to action to create a national campaign dedicated to improving Indian nutrition, reversing chronic health problems, reducing extreme poverty, and reclaiming traditional foodways in Indian country.”

– *Indian Country Today*, December 11, 2015



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SeedsOfNativeHealth.org

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