

Semi-annual report | March-September 2015

# Seeds *of* Native Health

A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition



[SeedsOfNativeHealth.org](http://SeedsOfNativeHealth.org)



SMSC Business Council

*Our tribe* has always practiced the traditional value of *wookiye*, helping others in need. Over the past 20 years, our Community has donated more than \$325 million to other tribes, Native American and non-Native American nonprofits, hospitals, and local governments for a variety of important projects across the country and in our home state of Minnesota. We have also provided more than \$500 million in loans to other tribes to help them achieve their economic development goals.

The Seeds of Native Health campaign represents a new approach for our Community's charitable work. We launched it not only to contribute our own money to improve nutrition in Indian Country, but to increase public awareness about the grave dietary health problems suffered by a large number of Native Americans and to enlist the help of key partners with the know-how and resources to find solutions.

In the campaign's first six months, we could not be more pleased with the early results. Our re-granting partners, First Nations Development Institute and the Notah Begay III Foundation, have begun to fund promising projects throughout the country. The University of Minnesota, a world-class research institution in the fields of food production, nutrition, and public health, is embarking on three groundbreaking projects. Since the campaign's announcement, we have begun a new collaboration with the American Heart Association

"You have all sorts of hopes and dreams when you have good partners like the Mdewakanton. It is pretty amazing when a tribe steps forward and takes an issue like this head-on. They have fully acknowledged that there is a health and nutrition and hunger crisis in Indian Country."

– Michael Roberts, president of First Nations Development Institute



and its Voices for Healthy Kids, a joint project with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to encourage more philanthropic giving in this effort. We have also been joined by the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, based at the University of Arkansas School of Law, which is creating a major tribal food codes project that we are co-funding with MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger under its Rural and Remote Initiative.

These first fruits of Seeds of Native Health are wonderful to see. But the needs of Native Americans – including that most basic of human needs, nutritious food – are enormous. We appreciate your interest in the charitable work of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, and encourage you to join us in improving Native American nutrition and solving the food and health crisis among Native peoples.

Toksa ake (see you again),

SMSC Business Council  
Chairman Charlie Vig  
Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson  
Secretary/Treasurer Lori K. Watso

"The new philanthropic push by Minnesota's Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community is so critical for the future of tribal communities in Minnesota and across the nation."

– Star Tribune editorial – March 26, 2015



*Vice-Chairman Keith Anderson and Secretary/Treasurer Lori Watso with the SMSC's strategic partners at the campaign announcement.*

## Seeds of Native Health tackles Native health disparities

Seeds of Native Health was launched in March 2015 by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and its original strategic partners, First Nations Development Institute, the Notah Begay III Foundation, and the University of Minnesota.

Extreme poverty and the loss of traditional foods over several generations have resulted in inadequate diets among many Native Americans, contributing greatly to poor health. Seeds of Native Health is a first-of-its-kind effort to comprehensively address the dietary problems in Indian Country – from education to research to access to traditional, healthy foods.

The SMSC is donating \$5 million over a two-year period to kick off the campaign. The tribe continues to leverage its initial investment to recruit additional strategic partners and funding for programs, education and research that will improve the state of Native nutrition.



“The numbers are so daunting that if we don’t pay attention to this as an economic issue, a social issue, or a self-determination issue, we’ll be facing an even more uphill battle. We need to think about how we’re serving our youth and preparing them for the future.”

– Justin Huenemann, executive director of the Notah Begay III Foundation

## The state of Native American nutrition

“Native people are so disproportionately affected in all health and socio-economic indicators. If we can improve nutrition, then we can address

some of these acute – and especially the chronic – health problems that Native communities face every day.”

– SMSC Secretary/Treasurer  
Lori Watso

A grave health crisis exists across Native American communities. In a wide range of health factors and diseases, disparities are greater for American Indians than for any demographic group in the United States. A large number of the health problems afflicting Indian Country are related to the enormous obstacles to accessing healthy food.

---

**2x**

Native Americans are twice as likely as the rest of the U.S. population to experience nutrition-related health problems.

---

**81%**

of Native Americans are obese or overweight.

---

**15%**

of Native Americans suffer from Type 2 diabetes, more than double the number of Caucasians.

---

**24%**

of Native American households are below the federal poverty line, compared to 15% of the U.S. population as a whole.

---

**<\$1  
million**

is spent by the U.S. government each year on Native American nutrition education.

---

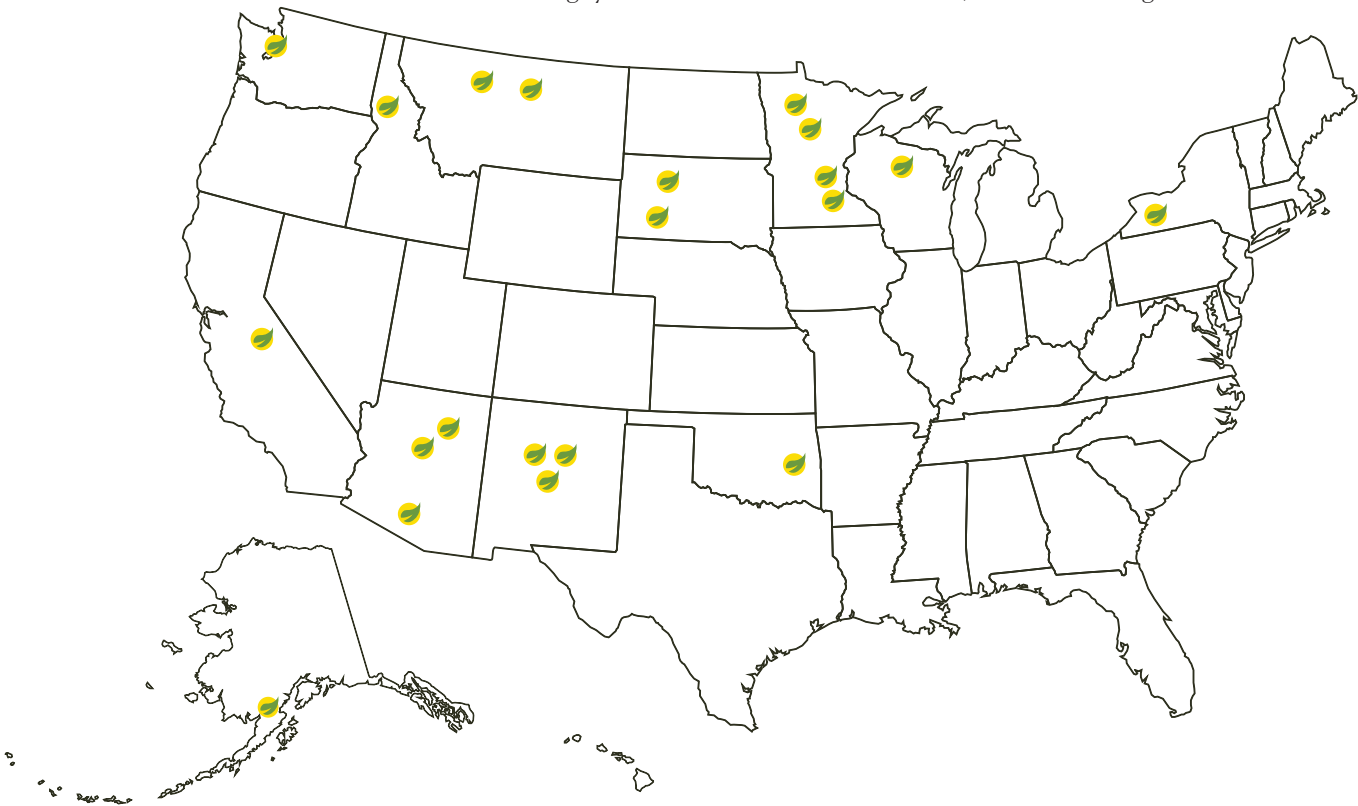


## Supporting local efforts



**Seeds of Native Health  
grant recipients**

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



"The state of nutrition for Native people has been one of silent crisis for generations. Fortunately, there are organizations who have been working across the country for years to address the causes of this nutrition crisis and lay the foundation for real, workable and permanent solutions. Through Seeds of Native Health, we are giving new support to these efforts."

– SMSC Vice-Chairman Keith Anderson

## GRANT RECIPIENTS



"The epidemics of obesity and diabetes in Native communities, even among our children, are direct consequences of limited access to healthy food."

– *Feeding Ourselves*,  
Crystal Echohawk,  
Janie Simms Hipp,  
and Wilson Pipestem

**Bishop Paiute Tribe**  
(Bishop, California)  
*Farm sustainability and education efforts*  
\$40,000

**Cheyenne River Youth Project**  
(Eagle Butte, South Dakota)  
*Community garden*  
\$40,000

**Cochiti Youth Experience**  
(Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico)  
*Youth farmer mentorship program*  
\$40,000

**Dream of Wild Health**  
(Hugo, Minnesota)  
*Youth leadership program  
and organic farm*  
\$40,000

**Igiugig Village**  
(Igiugig, Alaska)  
*Tribal greenhouse*  
\$39,794

**Intertribal Agriculture Council**  
(Billings, Montana)  
*Tribally supported agriculture project*  
\$17,887

**Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians**  
(Lac Du Flambeau, Wisconsin)  
*Youth community garden*  
\$40,000

**Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe**  
(Cass Lake, Minnesota)  
*Community garden*  
\$33,743

**Little Big Horn College**  
(Crow Agency, Montana)  
*Community garden and nutrition education*  
\$40,000

**Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative**  
(Okmulgee, Oklahoma)  
*Farming and gardening classes*  
\$40,000

**Nawayee Center School**  
(Minneapolis, Minnesota)  
*Nutrition program*  
\$40,000

**Nez Perce Tribe**  
(Lapwai, Idaho)  
*Community garden and smokehouse*  
\$37,629

“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 will we 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 of the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas School of Law

**North Leupp Family Farms**  
(Leupp, Arizona)  
*Fresh produce distribution*  
\$34,650

**Painted Desert Demonstration Project, DBA the STAR School**  
(Flagstaff, Arizona)  
*Community greenhouse*  
\$40,000

**Pueblo of Nambé**  
(Santa Fe, New Mexico)  
*Farming and agriculture education*  
\$37,404

**Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians**  
(Red Lake, Minnesota)  
*Pre-diabetes education*  
\$39,171

**Seneca Diabetes Foundation**  
(Irving, New York)  
*Cultivate, process and distribute white corn*  
\$32,040

**The Suquamish Tribe**  
(Suquamish, Washington)  
*Community smokehouses and nutrition education*  
\$28,773

**Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation**  
(Porcupine, South Dakota)  
*Health and wellness programs for children*  
\$40,000  
*Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition*  
\$21,909

**Tohono O’odham Community Action**  
(Sells, Arizona)  
*Gardening and nutrition classes*  
\$37,800

**Zuni Youth Enrichment Project**  
(Zuni, New Mexico)  
*Outdoor learning space and farmers market*  
\$40,000



"The problems facing many young Native Americans are great, but none are more fundamental than health problems which have their root cause in poor nutrition. This philanthropic effort led by the SMSC will be a game-changer."

– Notah Begay III, founder of the Notah Begay III Foundation

## GRANT-MAKING PARTNERS

Through Seeds of Native Health, the SMSC is partnering with leading organizations that have done pioneering work in nutrition, fitness and wellness.



***First Nations Development Institute** has longstanding expertise in efforts to eliminate food insecurity, build the health of communities, and support entrepreneurship and economic development. It is receiving \$1.4 million from the SMSC for re-granting to projects relating to food access, food sovereignty, and capacity building.*



***The Notah Begay III Foundation** is dedicated to promoting wellness among Native American children. It is receiving \$1.1 million from the SMSC for re-granting to projects relating to childhood nutrition.*

“We know heart health is shaped by what you eat, and without sufficient access to nutritious foods, Indian Country is facing a public health crisis.

The Shakopee tribe is strategically investing in the health of Native Americans through the Seeds of Native Health campaign. We are honored to join the SMSC and extend our support to plant more seeds of health – increasing awareness and energizing organizations across the country to invest in reducing health disparities of Native Americans.”

– Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association.

## Gaining momentum in the fight for Native nutrition

Since its launch in March, the Seeds of Native Health campaign has been steadily gaining momentum and strategic partners from across the country.

### American Heart Association

The SMSC and the American Heart Association are collaborating to accelerate the development of a national framework to improve Native American nutrition.

The two organizations are convening an unprecedented gathering of national philanthropic organizations on October 15 titled “Fertile Ground: Planting the Seeds for Native American Nutrition and Health.” Funders are being invited to discuss the Native American nutrition crisis and learn about opportunities to make critical investments in national strategies to solve it.



"*Feeding Ourselves* provides a clear analysis of and important solutions to the dietary problems among Native American communities, which undermine so devastatingly our peoples' health. All of us who are working to improve Native nutrition must applaud the American Heart Association and the authors of this report for casting a bright light on this crisis for a wider audience."

– SMSC Chairman Charlie Vig

## LANDMARK REPORT ON NATIVE AMERICAN FOOD ACCESS



The SMSC-American Heart Association collaboration follows the release of *Feeding Ourselves*, a new comprehensive report detailing the dietary crisis facing many Native American communities.

The report examines the barriers to food access and their link to health disparities in Indian Country. The report finds that Native Americans are twice as likely as the rest of the U.S. population to experience nutrition-related health problems.

The report calls for tribes, the federal government, and philanthropic organizations to serve as agents of change in the area of Native food access.

*Feeding Ourselves* was commissioned by the American Heart Association and its Voices for Healthy Kids, a joint initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and written and published by Echo Hawk Consulting. The full report may be viewed at [tinyurl.com/feedingourselves](http://tinyurl.com/feedingourselves).



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

– Dean Stacy Leeds, University of Arkansas School of Law



*University of Arkansas School of Law Dean  
Stacy Leeds, SMSC Secretary/Treasurer  
Lori Watso, and IFAI Director Janie Hipp*


## Gaining momentum in the fight for Native nutrition

### Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative

As a part of the Seeds of Native Health campaign to improve Native American nutrition, the SMSC has provided the leading gift in support of a landmark project to enhance tribal food sovereignty. The Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas School of Law will lead the development of a long-needed set of model food and agriculture codes for adoption by tribal nations.

The Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas will conduct listening sessions with tribes nationwide and develop model food and agriculture codes for tribes to customize and adopt as part of their legal codes. Without their own food and agriculture laws, tribes are subject to federal and state regulation, which can stifle food production. Tribal food and agriculture laws will allow individual tribal nations to better plan their own nutrition and economic development destinies.





"This unprecedented coalition is a meaningful and innovative approach to a systemic problem that should be a national outrage. MAZON is proud to bring its 30 years of anti-hunger advocacy experience to this remarkable project and to support the SMSC's Seeds of Native Health campaign and the University of Arkansas to create a long overdue legal framework which will make a real difference in the response to hunger among tribal nations."

— Abby J. Leibman, President and CEO of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

## MAZON: A JEWISH RESPONSE TO HUNGER



The Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative's project is also funded by MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, a national nonprofit working to end hunger among peoples of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States.

MAZON's Rural and Remote Initiative is committed to addressing food insecurity needs in rural, remote, and Native American communities and seeking solutions to alleviate hunger and increase access to healthy, affordable food in these communities.

This is an unprecedented coalition bringing together a prominent university, Native American tribe, and national Jewish nonprofit to advance an innovative solution to a systemic national problem.

The SMSC's leading gift of \$250,000 through Seeds of Native Health and MAZON's gift of \$50,000 through its Rural and Remote Initiative will support the first phase of an anticipated three-year project.



“Change requires true partnership. I think the exciting part is to have that opportunity to think about how we can really work together to create solutions.”

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



## Gaining momentum in the fight for Native nutrition

### University of Minnesota

As one of the top research and educational institutions in the country, with extensive competencies in agriculture, food science, public health, nutrition, and Native American culture, the University of Minnesota was a natural fit to participate in Seeds of Native Health.

The SMSC has gifted the University of Minnesota \$1 million to accomplish three projects.

1. Co-convene a national series of annual Native American nutrition conferences that raise awareness of the dietary crisis facing Native people, showcase the current state of research and practice, and identify areas for further work.
2. Develop appropriate cultural interfaces between academic research and the knowledge of Native communities.
3. Create a publicly accessible, multi-disciplinary bibliography relating to Native American nutrition and a searchable database of leading experts in relevant fields.



*The SMSC offers educational classes at its Wozupi (garden).*

## Committed to helping others

For generations, the Dakota people have maintained a strong tradition of helping others. Honoring their ancestors' values, the SMSC has continuously invested in its people, its neighbors, and other tribes and organizations across Minnesota and the rest of the country, working to build better communities for all.

Today, the SMSC is the largest philanthropic benefactor in Indian Country and one of the largest in Minnesota. Since opening its Gaming Enterprise in the early 1990s, the SMSC has donated more than \$325 million to various entities and causes, and provided \$500 million in economic development loans to help other tribes. Because less than one percent of all charitable donations in the United States goes to Native communities, the SMSC has a particular focus on helping other tribes provide critical services, bolster their economic self-determination, and preserve their cultures. In 2014 alone, the SMSC gave more than \$15 million in grants to Native American communities and nonprofits. In addition to its donations in Indian Country, the SMSC collaborates closely with neighboring local governments to fund mutually beneficial projects and priorities, like public safety initiatives, shared stewardship of natural resources, and regional infrastructure.

Through its generosity and long-term vision, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community exemplifies the Native principle of thinking seven generations ahead and the universal human value of helping others in need.



Seeds *of* Native Health  
A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition



[SeedsOfNativeHealth.org](http://SeedsOfNativeHealth.org)

[ShakopeeDakota.org](http://ShakopeeDakota.org)