

Semi-annual report | October 2016-March 2017

Seeds *of* Native Health

A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition



SeedsOfNativeHealth.org

"Countering a problem as huge as food insecurity and poor nutrition in impoverished Native communities requires tenacity on numerous levels—federal, tribal, nonprofit and grassroots."

- **Indian Country Today**, January 12, 2017



SMMC Business Council

Two years ago, our tribe launched Seeds of Native Health, a \$5 million national philanthropic campaign, to help address the food and nutritional health crisis which exists in Native American communities.

Since that time, we have learned a great deal from our strategic partners, allies, and grantees. We are heartened that our initiative has helped elevate general awareness of this serious problem, opened the eyes of more funders to consider the needs and opportunities around Native nutrition and food, and funded many projects to sustain the Native food movement.

We have also learned that so much more work still needs to be done. For that reason, our Community has committed an additional \$5 million over the next two years to continue this work to help solve the food crisis in Indian Country, making Seeds of Native Health now a four-year, \$10 million campaign to improve Native nutrition and food access.

In recent months, we have been thrilled to fund several new, exciting partnerships and initiatives with the foremost experts and visionary funders in this field.

"The SMSC has become a philanthropic force. Its efforts laudably include a growing focus on the health conditions linked to poor nutrition that plague many American Indians, such as diabetes."

- **Star Tribune editorial**, January 13, 2017



This report, like previous ones, summarizes those new projects as well as other work recently completed.

We are in awe of the dedication and hard work of the thousands of Native leaders, workers, activists, and many non-Native allies who have grown the Native food movement. And we are grateful to our many partners who have joined us in providing this movement with additional encouragement and tangible support.

We invite you to consider how you can make a lasting contribution to restore Native Americans' dietary health, foodways, food sovereignty, and economic self-reliance. Please learn more about Seeds of Native Health in this report and at SeedsOfNativeHealth.org.

SMSC Business Council

Chairman Charles R. Vig

Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson

Secretary/Treasurer Freedom Brewer



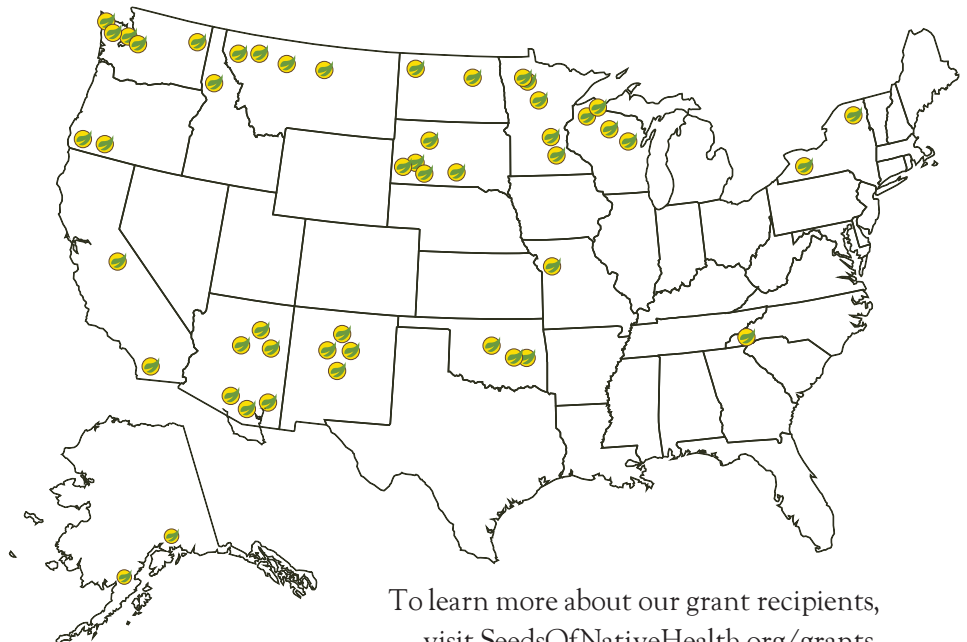
Supporting tribal food sovereignty

"Tribes across the country are struggling to access healthy food and develop their own food systems.

The SMSC has been a longstanding leader in support of tribal sovereignty and now is the national leader working on improving Native nutritional health."

- **Stacy Leeds** (Cherokee),
Dean, University of Arkansas
School of Law

Through our re-granting partners, First Nations Development Institute and the Notah Begay III Foundation, Seeds of Native Health has provided \$2.5 million in grants and technical assistance to 51 tribal and nonprofit projects in both reservation and urban settings. Projects have included educating community members about sustainable agriculture and traditional Native foods, developing local action plans to combat childhood obesity, and creating local food markets that provide fresh produce.



To learn more about our grant recipients,
visit SeedsOfNativeHealth.org/grants.



The Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (North Dakota) expanded the Full Circle Nutrition Program, a garden-to-plate program to improve students' cultural connection to food and nutrition.



Choctaw Fresh Produce (Mississippi) is expanding its organic food operations for tribal members, particularly youth, and low-income members.



The Squaxin Island Tribe (Washington) created a tribal community garden to improve food security and health outcomes.



The Nooksack Indian Tribe (Washington) created a community garden for tribal members.

Landmark conference called for integration of Indigenous knowledge and academic research

First Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition
September 26-27, 2016



*University of Minnesota President
Eric Kaler*

The First Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition was a milestone event in the growing movement to restore Native health by understanding and reclaiming traditional diets and foodways.

Co-sponsored by the SMSC and the University of Minnesota's Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute, this national, scientific conference was the first of its kind, and brought together both academic and Indigenous knowledge systems.

The sold-out gathering featured presentations by more than 30 Indigenous nutrition experts and united more than 450 academics, tribal leaders, Native practitioners, and public health workers from 32 states, five countries, and dozens of tribes throughout Indian Country.

A summary report, videos of the presentations and panel discussions, and other resources are available on the conference website (SeedsOfNativeHealth.org/2016conference). The conference proceedings will be published in summer 2017.



Lori Watso

"As Native people of this land, we are taking charge of our nutritional destiny, and we invite others to join us in this exciting and game-changing work."

- **Lori Watso** (Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community), Chair, Seeds of Native Health

Register for the Second Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition

September 18-20, 2017 | Mystic Lake Casino Hotel | Prior Lake, MN

Join us for this annual conference that brings together tribal officials, researchers, practitioners, and others to discuss the current state of Indigenous and academic scientific knowledge about Native nutrition and food science, and to identify new areas of work.

Register at SeedsOfNativeHealth.org/conference.

Indigenous wisdom and academic learning converge at Native nutrition conference

"It's been fascinating to learn the ways and the methods that other tribes have been using to provide better options for themselves as well as bring the community together."

- Ryan Bad Heart Bull
(Oglala and Hunkpapa Lakota)



Amber Cardinal, MPH (Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Nation and Keweenaw Bay Band of Ojibwa), Project Coordinator, American Indian Cancer Foundation



Gary Ferguson, ND (Unangan/Aleut), CEO, Rural Community Action Program

"We need to tell our own stories. We need our people in the highest places of research so that they are the ones making funding decisions and building the evidence."

- **Holly Hunts**, Associate Professor, Montana State University



Conference attendees participate in a breakout session.



Justin Huenemann (Navajo Nation), President and CEO, Notah Begay III Foundation

"There is a nutritional health crisis in Indian Country, and its leading cause is the lack of access to healthy, affordable food. This partnership offers a new model to address food access problems at the tribal level."

- **Chairman Charles R. Vig** (Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community)

Historic partnership forged to address Native food crisis



From left to right: SMSC Chairman Charles R. Vig, then-AmeriCorps VISTA Director Max Finberg, SMSC Secretary/Treasurer Freedom Brewer, Seeds of Native Health Chair Lori Watso, and SMSC Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson

The SMSC is partnering with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI) to create a cadre of "Native Food Sovereignty Fellows."

The 21 fellows will be AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers working in teams in 10 low-resource Native American communities to establish and stabilize food sovereignty efforts, food systems, and tribal economies that build economic opportunities around food and agriculture.

The SMSC is providing a \$200,000 gift to fund the cost-share for VISTA members' living allowance in the first year of the program. This represents the first time in VISTA's 52-year history in which a tribe is providing funding to deploy VISTA members nationally.

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program established specifically to help alleviate poverty. Founded in 1965 as the domestic version of the Peace Corps, VISTA taps the skills, talents and passions of more than 8,000 Americans annually to build the capacity of nonprofit organizations or local government agencies to carry out programs that tackle poverty.

IFAI at the University of Arkansas School of Law will recruit, train, deploy and supervise the work of these VISTA volunteers.



AmeriCorps VISTA member Valerie Fernando (Laguna) is serving at the Laguna Community Foundation as a language and cultural preservation specialist. Her position is similar to those that will be funded by the SMSC. (Photo provided by AmeriCorps VISTA.)

"We are so proud to support this culturally competent and innovative approach to addressing specific Tribal community needs, by harnessing the organizational support available through our partner, the University of Arkansas' Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, and the generosity of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community."

- Max Finberg,
Former Director,
AmeriCorps VISTA

"We appreciate the SMSC as a visionary tribal nation and a long-time, generous supporter of the American Diabetes Association. With Shakopee's leadership through Seeds of Native Health, we may get one step closer to solving the diabetes epidemic, which disproportionately affects Native Americans."

- **Tamara Darsow**, PhD, Senior Vice President of Research and Consumer Programs, American Diabetes Association

Piloting a promising, nutrition-focused diabetes support program in Indian Country



With almost 16% of the Native population diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, diabetes is the fourth leading cause of death among Native Americans. There are currently no large-scale, culturally-competent support programs in Native communities that focus exclusively on diet, a key behavioral risk factor for diabetes complications.

The SMSC has provided a challenge grant of \$225,000 to adapt the American Diabetes Association's What Can I Eat program for use in Native communities, with pilots in six sites across Indian Country over the next three years. It will involve promoting healthy eating behaviors within the cultural, social, historical, and environmental context of daily life in those communities.

The What Can I Eat program has demonstrated early successes in both rural and urban African American communities. The ADA will partner with a research university to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the program in Native settings. If the program is successful, it could be expanded across Indian Country.

"This support is a gift to healthy future Navajo generations. This unique collaboration is one vital component toward the movement to empower our communities to create positive, sustainable, healthy environments."

- **Denisa Livingston** (Navajo), Diné Community Advocacy Alliance

Funding collaborative supports implementation of the Healthy Diné Nation Act



Navajo Nation's budget and finance committee discusses the healthy foods legislation at a recent meeting.

In 2014, the Navajo Nation authorized an additional 2% sales tax on unhealthy foods and sugar-sweetened beverages in all retail locations on the Navajo reservation - the first junk food tax to be enacted in the United States. The legislation also removed the sales tax on healthy foods sold on the reservation. Proceeds from the tax are used to fund community-based wellness programs.

Launched with a challenge grant from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, First Nations Development Institute formed a unique funding collaborative to support the Diné Community Advocacy Alliance (DCAA) in its efforts to assist the tribal government in implementing this innovative healthy foods legislation.

Besides the SMSC, the funding collaborative includes the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Christensen Fund, and an anonymous private donor, providing a combined gift of \$262,000.

With this support, DCAA will work to ensure that Navajo chapters on the geographically large reservation can access funds to create healthy living programs, as well as ensure accurate tax compliance, conduct public education, assist retail vendors, and evaluate the effectiveness of the tax.

"We're excited to be working with the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, an important benefactor of Indian Country, and Better Way Foundation, an extraordinary player in the areas of childhood philanthropy and Native education. The Minneapolis Fed's track record of important research on ECD issues and the work by our Center for Indian Country Development are a perfect match for this project."

- **Neel Kashkari**, President, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Focusing on early childhood development for Minnesota's Native children



Center for
Indian Country
Development

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK
of MINNEAPOLIS

Native American children face larger disparities in education, health, income, and access to basic services and opportunities than any other child population in the United States. Investing in Native early childhood development (ECD) programs and pre-natal, neo-natal, and early childhood nutrition can improve cognitive development and help reverse these disturbing trends.

The SMSC, Better Way Foundation, and the Center for Indian Country Development (CICD) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis are collaborating on the Healthy Children, Healthy Nations initiative to develop a strategic plan to improve early childhood development (ECD) and childhood nutrition in Minnesota's Native communities. Better Way Foundation and the Seeds of Native Health campaign are each committing up to \$85,000 to fund this initiative, while the CICD/Minneapolis Fed will serve as research partner.

The three-way partnership will work to identify best practices and promising models in Indian Country; determine critical needs around these issues in Native communities; and build consensus around strategies and funding recommendations to improve the well-being of Minnesota's Native children and future generations. This project will result in the production of an action plan in late 2017 to strengthen Native ECD and childhood nutrition efforts in Minnesota. It is hoped that this plan may eventually serve as a model for others in Indian Country.

"As a land-grant university, we have an important role to play in providing the Native community with supportive, useful interdisciplinary research that truly advances Native interests."

- **Brian Buhr**, Dean, University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences



HEALTHY FOODS,
HEALTHY LIVES INSTITUTE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Publishing academic research on Native nutrition

The SMSC and the University of Minnesota's Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute are jointly launching the *International Journal of Indigenous People's Food, Nutrition and Wellbeing*, the first-ever academic journal devoted to the scientific study of Native nutrition and dietary health. The creation and first year of publication are being funded with a \$145,000 founding gift from the SMSC.

The peer-reviewed, open-access journal will serve as a new platform to encourage and disseminate academic and Native knowledge. It will feature a Native editor-in-chief, who will lead an editorial board consisting of both Native and non-Native researchers.

The proceedings from the First Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition will be published in the new journal in summer 2017.



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