

Semi-annual report | April–September 2017

Seeds *of* Native Health

A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition



SeedsOfNativeHealth.org



SMSC Business Council

Good nutrition is essential for the health of any individual or community, but Native Americans have too often lived in scarcity.

Many tribes and urban Native communities have taken incredible strides to improve the dietary well-being of their members, and the SMSC is proud to support these efforts through Seeds of Native Health. Over the past three years, our initiative has helped elevate general awareness of the problems; funded many projects to sustain the Native food movement; and opened the eyes of more funders to consider the needs and opportunities around Native nutrition and food systems work.

In recent months, we have been thrilled to fund several new partnerships and initiatives with some of the foremost experts in this field. We are grateful to our many partners who have joined us in providing this movement with additional encouragement and financial support.

"Most of Indian Country is in a dietary health crisis, caused by food access problems and contributing to the worst health disparities of any group of Americans. For the past three years, our tribe has collaborated with many partners on promising solutions, but a great deal of work remains to be done to address this crisis."

Chairman Charles R. Vig, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community



We invite you to learn more about Seeds of Native Health in this report and online at SeedsOfNativeHealth.org.

We urge you to consider how you can help make a lasting contribution to restore Native Americans' food sovereignty and dietary health.

Charles R. Vig Keith B. Anderson Freedom Brewer

SMSC Business Council

Chairman Charles R. Vig

Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson

Secretary/Treasurer Freedom Brewer



Supporting Native early childhood development and nutrition

“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 ECD and nutrition programs can improve cognitive development and help reverse these disturbing trends.”

- **Ian Widmer**, Chair, Better Way Foundation board of directors

This spring, Seeds of Native Health launched the Healthy Children, Healthy Nations initiative in collaboration with Better Way Foundation and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Center for Indian Country Development (CICD).

All children are the hope for their communities’ futures. However, Native children face many obstacles to their ability to thrive, be healthy, and fully access opportunities which can maximize their potential.

Healthy Children, Healthy Nations hosted three convenings with stakeholders to identify best practices and promising models in Native early childhood development (ECD) and nutrition; determine critical needs around these issues in Indian Country; and build a consensus around strategies and funding recommendations to improve the well-being of Minnesota’s Native kids.

HEALTHY CHILDREN HEALTHY NATIONS



Charting Pathways on Early Childhood Development and Nutrition for Minnesota's Native Children

Using input and feedback from the three convenings, the partners are developing a strategic plan to improve ECD and childhood nutrition in Minnesota's Native communities. The report will be released at SeedsOfNativeHealth.org/ECD in October 2017.

By the numbers

- 50% of Native children under age five in Minnesota live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level (\$24,600 for a family of four).
- 23% of Native Americans in Minnesota have endured five or more adverse childhood experiences, which are associated with increased rates of anxiety, depression, asthma and smoking. This is the highest rate among all races.
- 28% of Native American youth ages 2-5 in Minnesota are considered obese, more than twice the average rate of 12.7% across all racial groups.
- Food deserts exist near several of Minnesota's Native American reservations, where residents live far from a grocery store.

Research conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Center for Indian Country Development.

"If community-wide conditions do not change, it will be hard to change the ongoing cycle of trauma in which the child is being raised... It will require long-term investment, not a one-shot deal, to improve conditions for young children."

- Early childhood development stakeholder

Building consensus to support Native youth

Stakeholders convening | May 10-11, 2017

Sixty-five Minnesota-based experts discussed opportunities to positively impact Native children. The experts included Native ECD practitioners, Native language and culture educators, nutrition and health advocates, experts in early childhood brain development, behavioral health and trauma, ECD researchers, policy advocates, and other relevant stakeholders.

Participants shared their insights and developed a collective vision on improving early childhood development and nutrition for Minnesota's Native children. The group prioritized two action strategies:

- Create a 10-year vision for Native early childhood development and nutrition throughout Minnesota.
- Identify enduring and recurring obstacles that block the vision for effectively collaborating to serve Native child development across the state.



*Chairman Charles R. Vig,
Shakopee Mdewakanton
Sioux Community*

"It is important to recognize that we all have the same vision, and we want the best ...for the children, whether on reservations, in rural areas, or in urban areas."

- Early childhood development stakeholder

Funders convening | July 11, 2017

Funders representing more than a dozen philanthropic organizations came together to discuss long-range goals, policy priorities, barriers, and opportunities for supporting Native childhood nutrition and ECD. Drawing on the experience of key Native practitioners, participants focused on the development of a framework for systems change and action to improve programs benefiting Native children up to five years old in Minnesota.



Tribal leaders convening | August 15, 2017

Minnesota's tribal leaders gathered to discuss ways to best provide education, nutrition, and health care for Native children in Minnesota. The tribal leaders also discussed findings from the previous Healthy Children, Healthy Nations convenings and provided their ideas and priorities for how tribal policies and actions could support improved ECD and health outcomes.

"As Congress prepares to shape the next Farm Bill, there has never been a more critical time for Native Americans to unite to defend our interests. Tribal governments, Native producers, environmental stewards, and Native community members must work together to involve Congress in helping us solve this crisis."

- **Chairman Charles R. Vig**, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

Indian Country prepares for 2018 Farm Bill

Major tribal report lays the foundation for unified advocacy

The economic and dietary health of Native Americans hangs in the balance with the 2018 Farm Bill, according to a major new report commissioned by Seeds of Native Health.

The report, entitled *Regaining Our Future: An Assessment of Risks and Opportunities for Native Communities in the 2018 Farm Bill*, is the most comprehensive analysis ever conducted on Farm Bill issues relevant to Indigenous populations in the United States.

Efforts by the United States Congress to write the 2018 Farm Bill will have significant consequences for the nation's 5 million Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

Farm Bill policies can either have a positive or detrimental effect on communities. In recent years, there has been a growing grassroots movement within Indian Country to reclaim Native foodways and improve food security, but federal policies often have a detrimental influence on Native nutrition, agriculture, ranching, farming, conservation, trade and forestry.

Native communities must be prepared to better advocate for their interests, defend programs on which their most vulnerable members depend, and look for new ways to achieve greater food sovereignty and food security through increased self-reliance and reform of federal policies.





Vice-Chair Keith Anderson discusses the Farm Bill with U.S. Senator Tom Udall.

Regaining Our Future is serving as a foundation for a unified advocacy effort to ensure effective and thoughtful federal policy for Indian Country's nutritional, agricultural, conservation, and rural development needs. A coalition is being organized by the SMSC, the Intertribal Agriculture Council, the National Congress of American Indians, the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, and the Intertribal Timber Council to defend Native communities' interests and urge appropriate reforms.

About the Farm Bill

One of the largest pieces of domestic legislation, the Farm Bill is historically considered by Congress every five years. It serves as the primary vehicle for developing federal food and agriculture policies, including nutrition, crop insurance, conservation, commodity programs, research, and education. The most recent Farm Bill, enacted in 2014, included \$489 billion in spending annually.

"We must be knowledgeable of and engaged in the improvement and development of federal food policy, because it directly impacts our lands, our foods, our waters, our natural resources, and our economic development opportunities. *Regaining Our Future* sets the groundwork for tribes to work together from a common understanding and advocate for that most basic of human needs, the ability to feed ourselves in our own food systems with our own foods."

- Janie Simms Hipp
(Chickasaw Nation), Director, Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas School of Law



Developing culturally appropriate nutrition programming



Seeds of Native Health is partnering with Johns Hopkins University's Center for American Indian Health to pilot *Healthy Futures*, a comprehensive initiative designed to significantly improve health and nutrition in tribal communities.

Healthy Futures is a culturally relevant nutrition, healthy lifestyles education, and food system-based approach to combating diabetes, obesity, and other nutrition-related diseases that disproportionately affect Native Americans.





Healthy Futures includes:

- Community events and activities, including fruit and vegetable gardens, sports camps, and elders' teachings of traditional healthy eating practices.
- School-based edible school garden and nutrition curriculum.
- Nutrition and physical activity coaching for adolescents at risk of Type 2 diabetes, conducted through home visits with teens and their families.

The new *Healthy Futures* program will be implemented and rigorously evaluated with two Southwest tribal communities. Once proven, the program will be made available for replication by additional tribes across the country.

Additional project funders include the Walmart Foundation and the Ellen and Michael Kullman family.

"We are grateful to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community for their investment to build tribal communities' capacity to improve health and well-being through improved nutrition, fitness and education."

- **Allison Barlow,**
PhD, MPH, Director,
Johns Hopkins Center for
American Indian Health

Partnering with Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee to improve Native nutrition



With its hosting Super Bowl LII in February 2018, the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee's Legacy Fund is ensuring that this one-time event leaves a positive, statewide impact for many years to come. Through its 52 Weeks of Giving campaign, 52 communities are receiving grants to help improve the health and wellness of young people in Minnesota.

With a \$300,000 contribution from Seeds of Native Health, the SMSC is making possible Legacy Fund grants to four Native American community projects related to nutrition and food access. As of this printing, two of the grants have been announced.

Dream of Wild Health

Dream of Wild Health, a 10-acre organic farm in Hugo, received a \$50,000 grant in July to implement a teaching kitchen. The kitchen will allow the farm to offer new programs centered on reconnecting Native American youth and families with the culinary, spiritual and medicinal uses of Indigenous plants. Dream of Wild Health will offer training and certifications on sustainable, healthy food preparation and farming. The kitchen also supports its mission to address issues related to systemic poverty and disease and promote positive economic and self-sufficient food preparation and sourcing options for Native American families.



SMSC Chairman Charles R. Vig and Minnesota Health Commissioner Ed Ehlinger help Dream of Wild Health's leaders and volunteers celebrate their new grant.

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe received a \$100,000 grant in August to help purchase, stock and staff a mobile teaching kitchen. Members of the community will use the kitchen for hands-on cooking lessons and learn overall best practices for sustainable and affordable cooking. The kitchen's curriculum will teach the basics of proper nutrition and incorporate recipes for simple, traditional and economically feasible meals. Its long-term objective centers on educating young people and families on nutritious food options to reduce consumption of processed, high-sugar, and high-fat foods and improve the long-term health and wellness of the Native community in Leech Lake.



SMSC Community Member Karen Anderson (second row, on right) helps the Legacy Fund's Dana Nelson present the award to Leech Lake leaders and volunteers.

"The grant from the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee Legacy Fund will help us tear down social and economic barriers facing our young people by educating them on how to prepare simple, healthy foods. The teaching kitchen is an opportunity to improve long-term health and wellness for the next generation of our community."

- James Monchamp
(Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe),
Executive Director, Leech Lake
Band of Ojibwe

"The 2016 conference was incredibly informative and personally transformative. This conference series represents a great step forward in the way we serve Indigenous communities. By utilizing the best of Indigenous wisdom and academic knowledge, we are creating something together that we could not do alone."

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

Annual conference series brings together Indigenous knowledge and academic research

Save the Date:

Third Annual Conference on
Native American Nutrition

October 3-5, 2018

Mystic Lake Center
Prior Lake, MN

SeedsOfNativeHealth.org/conference

Building on last year's highly successful inaugural conference, the SMSC and the University of Minnesota's Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute are co-sponsoring the Second Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition on September 18-20, 2017.

This annual conference 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 identify new areas of work.

The 2017 conference will feature speakers on topics such as:

- Healthfulness of traditional foods
- Indigenous evaluation frameworks
- Successfully translating research into practice
- Environmental, land and nutrition

A summary report, videos of the presentations and panel discussions, and other resources will be available following the conference at SeedsOfNativeHealth.org/conference.

Seeds of Native Health outreach

Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders | June 27

At the annual SAFSF Forum, Seeds of Native Health sponsored a workshop entitled “How can we be food sovereign when we’re not water sovereign?” Panelists discussed water threats posed to Native communities, even as they are achieving a greater measure of control in designing their own food systems.



National Caucus of Native American State Legislators | August 10

At NCNASL’s annual meeting, Seeds of Native Health sponsored a session that explored the intersection of federal, state and tribal policies related to Native American nutrition, food access, and food sovereignty. Presenters Janie Hipp and Crystal Echo Hawk, co-authors of the 2015 *Feeding Ourselves* report, also discussed the state government implications of the 2018 Farm Bill for tribes and urban Native communities.

Native American Journalist Association | September 8

This year’s NAJA national conference featured a seminar on health and nutrition reporting in Indian Country, sponsored by Seeds of Native Health. This event was held in conjunction with the Society of Professional Journalists’ annual convention in Anaheim, California, to increase mainstream media’s understanding of the importance of covering Indigenous issues.





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