

Semi-annual report | October 2017-March 2018

Seeds *of* Native Health
A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition



SeedsOfNativeHealth.org



SMSC Business Council

Our tribe began its Seeds of Native Health campaign to improve Native American nutrition three years ago. Over that time, we've supported grassroots food sovereignty efforts through grant-making; raised public awareness about the dietary health crisis in much of Indian Country; provided the funding for new programs and research projects; and partnered with other organizations to bring additional resources and focus to this grave problem.

Our most recent activities, described in this report, have broken important, new ground. We helped launch and presently co-lead the Native Farm Bill Coalition to give a strong, united voice for Indian Country in the shaping of that highly consequential legislation, which touches on the nutrition and food systems of all Americans. We also collaborated on a framework to improve the nutrition and early cognitive development of Minnesota's Native children. And we co-created and co-funded a new grant program to support innovative nutrition-related health advocacy efforts in Native communities.

None of these new efforts would have been possible without the wonderful partnerships we have forged with others – Native and non-Native – who are deeply committed to supporting Native nutrition.

"Solving disparities begins with tackling the nutrition crisis and lack of access to healthy and natural foods in Indian Country. Through our Seeds of Native Health campaign, the SMSC is shining a light on a root cause of the health crisis faced by Native Americans."

Chairman Charles R. Vig, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community



Through these collaborations, Seeds of Native Health has become the single-largest coordinated and multifaceted effort to improve the dietary health of Native Americans.

But so much more remains to be done. There are many tribes, grassroots leaders, nutritionists, Native producers, and researchers whose work deserves support and encouragement. The work of our tribe and our partners can only do so much to sustain them – the real heroes of the food movement in Indian Country – who are working tirelessly to restore Native peoples' nutritional health and close the worst health disparities to be found among all Americans.

Please consider how you can join us – and them – in this work. We invite you to learn more about Seeds of Native Health in this report and online at SeedsOfNativeHealth.org.

Charles R. Vig Keith B. Anderson Freedom Brewer

SMSC Business Council

Chairman Charles R. Vig

Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson

Secretary/Treasurer Freedom Brewer



Native Farm Bill Coalition advocates for Indian Country

One in four Native Americans relies on federally supported nutrition assistance programs for survival. Native producers face huge obstacles in accessing U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. While federal rural development and conservation programs have made some inroads into Indian Country through targeted cost share programs and rural development infrastructure investments, challenges remain. These are among the many critical issues in the Farm Bill that challenge Native communities.

"The effort of the Native Farm Bill Coalition represents the very first time such a concerted effort has been made on behalf of all of Indian Country."

-Zach Ducheneaux
(Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe),
Secretary, Intertribal
Agriculture Council

Congressional action is needed this year to reauthorize the next Farm Bill, one of the largest pieces of domestic legislation, which is enacted every five years or so. For this reason, making sure that the 2018 Farm Bill protects and advances Indian Country's interests is a crucial way to improve Native American nutrition.

Building off of the *Regaining Our Future* report, commissioned by the SMSC last year, a new advocacy group has been organized to mount the first effort ever undertaken to impact the entire Farm Bill in defense of Indian Country's past hard-won gains and to pursue new opportunities for the future. With more than 120 member tribes and organizations, the Native Farm Bill Coalition gives Native Americans a strong, united voice to advance a common Farm Bill agenda benefiting

“Tribes are not truly sovereign unless we are also food sovereign. The Coalition represents the most cohesive effort ever created in Indian Country to give us more tools to achieve and maintain our food sovereignty, from protecting and improving nutrition assistance, to expanding the Buy Indian program and allowing tribal self-administration of other federal programs.”

- **Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson** (Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community), Co-Chair of the Native Farm Bill Coalition

Native communities and producers.

The Native Farm Bill Coalition is a joint project of the SMSC's Seeds of Native Health campaign, the Intertribal Agriculture Council, the National Congress of American Indians, and the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative.

To learn more and to join the Coalition, visit NativeFarmBillCoalition.org.



The Native Farm Bill Coalition is co-chaired by SMSC Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson and Intertribal Agriculture Council Executive Director Ross Racine.

Priorities

Indian Country is a leading force in American agriculture. There are more than 80,000 individual Native producers who contribute \$3.4 billion to the industry across the Native American land base, totaling some 110 million acres.

The Native Farm Bill Coalition is asking for parity for Native American tribes in the Farm Bill to expressly guarantee equal opportunity, and equal and direct access, to all federal assistance provided by USDA programs. The Coalition also wants the Farm Bill to expressly authorize Native American self-determination authority (also called “638” authority) to be applied to the Farm Bill’s nutrition and forestry titles, so that tribal governments can have the opportunity to administer USDA programs for adaptation to tribal priorities and customs in ways that produce better and more cost-effective outcomes.



Charting pathways for better Native childhood nutrition and development

Healthy Children, Healthy Nations is an ambitious initiative to improve Minnesota Native children's well-being through better educational and social outcomes. The project is a partnership between the SMSC's Seeds of Native Health, Better Way Foundation, and the Center for Indian Country Development at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

After three convenings in 2017 with practitioners, funders, and tribal leaders, the Healthy Children, Healthy Nations partners published in March 2018 a comprehensive framework focused on quality early childhood development programs and healthy diets. The report specifically identifies three main focus areas:

- Expanding Native early childhood development programs
- Providing healthy "first foods" to Native kids
- Building whole children, families and communities

The report is available for download at SeedsOfNativeHealth.org/ECD.

“There is much to be done to improve the educational outcomes, nutrition, and holistic health of Native children. This effort requires long-term thinking and a growing collaborative effort to support Native children and communities, particularly through Native-led initiatives.”

- **Andreas Hipple**, Executive Director, Better Way Foundation

Moving toward action

The key to improving early brain development, dietary health, and educational outcomes for Minnesota’s Native American children requires long-term thinking and commitments by tribes, Native communities, funders, policy makers, and institutions throughout the state. Healthy Children, Healthy Nations partners are taking the following steps to foster the next phase of action:

- **Collaborative fund** – assemble resources to support investment in promising models, capacity building, knowledge building, and effective programming. The SMSC and Better Way Foundation have pledged \$200,000 — \$100,000 each — to seed the collaborative fund.
- **Funders collaborative** – create opportunities for philanthropy to participate in knowledge building, networking, collaboration, and aligned grant-making.
- **Statewide conference** – convene practitioners, funders, tribal leaders, Native families, advocates, and other stakeholders to prioritize issues and create defined action plans at a conference to be hosted by the SMSC on September 18-19, 2018.
- **Advocacy** – lay the groundwork for policy changes and funding increases in support of comprehensive Native early childhood development efforts.



“Community-driven policy decisions are critical as Native communities seek to improve the health of their people. With the SMSC and American Heart Association’s support, this grant program can empower Native organizations to plan, organize, and build support for Native-led policy change.”

- **Kris Rhodes,**
Executive Officer, American
Indian Cancer Foundation

Fertile Ground grants promote nutrition and health policy efforts

Five Native nonprofit organizations were awarded Fertile Ground grants to support innovative, nutrition-related health advocacy efforts in Native American communities.

Jointly funded by the SMSC and the American Heart Association, the competitive grant program was designed to create sustainable community health improvements through nutrition and food sovereignty efforts. The \$35,000 grants provide support for Native-led convenings to identify community health priorities; advocacy and policy strategies which address improving health outcomes; and food sovereignty work rooted in tradition, culture, and Indigenous knowledge.



“Investing in these tribal-led organizations through the Fertile Ground Grant Program will result in long overdue and sustainable progress in community health. Our strong relationship with the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, including this grant program, is an important aspect of our vision of equitable health for Native people.”

- Nancy Brown, CEO, American Heart Association

This grant program is the latest in a series of AHA-SMSC collaborations to address the dietary health crisis in Indian Country. The two entities organized the groundbreaking Fertile Ground conference in 2015, bringing together national funders to discuss Native food access and nutrition, and the Fertile Ground II conference in 2016 for Native activists to share ideas on policy changes for improved health and nutrition.

The American Indian Cancer Foundation is the intermediary partner for the Fertile Ground Grant Program, administering the program and providing technical assistance to grantees.

Grant recipients

- Feed Seven Generations (Washington)
- Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment (New Mexico)
- Na’ah Illahe Fund (Washington)
- College of Menomonee Nation (Wisconsin)
- 4-Directions Development (Minnesota)



Robert Wood Johnson
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MAKING EACH DAY HEALTHIER FOR ALL CHILDREN™





Annual conference series brings together Indigenous knowledge and academic research

From its inception, the Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition series has been envisioned as a venue for the exchange and integration of Indigenous wisdom and academic knowledge. Leaders, researchers and practitioners can discuss critical work, vital questions, and crucial needs associated with food, nutrition and culture to solve the dietary health crisis in Indian Country.

Last fall, more than 500 people – tribal officials, elders, youth, researchers, and practitioners from 37 states, four countries, and more than 50 different tribes – came together for rich discussions on Native

“This is a unique conference that brings together the latest in nutrition science and the remarkable perspectives of our traditional leaders. I think both the traditional world and the scientific community have much to learn from each other.

This conference provides the perfect venue for a new type of learning to occur.”

-Donald Warne, MD, (Oglala Lakota) Professor and Chair, Department of Public Health, North Dakota State University



nutrition and food science. Building upon the success of the inaugural conference the preceding year, the 2017 conference focused on themes of traditional foods, community-university collaborations, environment, and elders' knowledge.

The conference was an incredible showcase of the current state of work being done to restore Native dietary health.

Download the conference report, find presentations, and watch videos of full presentations at SeedsOfNativeHealth.org/2017Conference.

The conference is co-hosted by the SMSC and the University of Minnesota's Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute.

Save the Date:
Third Annual Conference on
Native American Nutrition
October 2-5, 2018
Mystic Lake Center
Prior Lake, MN
SeedsOfNativeHealth.org/conference





Partnering with the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee to improve Native nutrition



Super Bowl LII has come and gone, but the event left a positive, statewide impact for many years to come, thanks to the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee's Legacy Fund. The SMSC provided \$300,000 to the Legacy Fund's 52 Weeks of Giving Campaign for re-granting to four Native American community projects related to nutrition and food access.

In addition to the previously announced grants to Dream of Wild Health and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, the SMSC provided the funds for grants to the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and the Upper Sioux Community.

Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

In October, the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa received an \$85,000 grant to improve health and nutrition efforts. The grant will help fund three projects:

- An extension of a walking path near the Fond du Lac Tribal Center
- Updates to the community and school gardens
- Reopening the Brookston Community Center Skating Rink



SMSC Chairman Charles R. Vig (left) presents a grant to the Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

Upper Sioux Community

In November, the Upper Sioux Community received a \$100,000 grant to support and strengthen their healthy foods initiative, Zani Woyute. The Zani Woyute project focuses on getting Upper Sioux youth involved in agriculture and food preparation while increasing food access for the entire community. This grant will support gardening, cooking, and preserving activities for youth through summer and after-school programs.



SMSC Member Jesse Chase (Middle Back)
presents a grant to the Upper Sioux Community.

"Nutrition is critical for leading healthy lives – especially for children. And Native Americans are much more likely to face nutrition-related health problems in their lifetimes. We are so proud to partner with the Super Bowl Legacy Fund to support the Upper Sioux Community's new food sovereignty initiative, Zani Woyute."

- Jesse Chase

(Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community), SMSC Education Work Group Leader



Reducing sugary beverages in Native communities



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sugar-sweetened beverages are the most common source of added sugar in children's diets. Because more than 45 percent of Native American children aged two to five years old are obese, reducing the consumption of unhealthy, sugary beverages in Native communities is critical to reducing this obesity epidemic.

The SMSC is providing \$250,000 to the Notah Begay III Foundation to expand its healthy beverage initiative, developing capacity-building resources and supporting model programs which prioritize the reduced consumption of sugary beverages and increased access to and consumption of safe drinking water.

The SMSC's contribution augments funding from W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and others.

Laying the foundation for the next generation of Native American food and nutrition leaders

One byproduct of the SMSC's annual nutrition conference in 2016 was a series of conversations among leaders of the Universities of Minnesota and Arkansas and others on how higher education institutions can better respond to Native communities' nutrition and food production needs. In 2017, those discussions resulted in a common desire to create a talent pipeline for the encouragement, training, and placement of future Native American leaders in the fields of food production, food science, nutrition, agriculture lending, and related fields. The SMSC recently provided \$250,000 in funding and commissioned leaders at the universities to convene a blue-ribbon panel to identify the obstacles and opportunities, and recommend a plan of action involving the collaboration of land-grant institutions, tribal colleges, youth agriculture groups, and national service organizations.



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