

Growing the Native American movement
for improved dietary health and food access



Seeds *of* Native Health
A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition

A philanthropic initiative of the
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community





For generations,

the Dakota people have maintained a strong tradition of helping others. Our tribe honors this tradition by investing in our people, our neighbors, and other tribes and organizations to help support communities across Minnesota and the country.

Indian Country faces a dietary health crisis. Poor nutrition is a leading factor in why Native Americans have the worst health disparities of any group in the United States.

Many practitioners, researchers and advocates have recognized this problem and are working to improve nutrition and restore healthful diets. That's why our tribe launched its Seeds of Native Health campaign to support these efforts and encourage broader strategies to improve Indian nutrition now and into the future. Since launching this \$10 million campaign in 2015, our tribe has worked to raise public awareness about this health crisis; supported grassroots food sovereignty efforts through grantmaking; and funded new programs and research projects.

None of these efforts would have been possible without our many partners—organizations which are committed to improving Native nutrition across the United States. We are proud to support their innovative, impactful work.

We are heartened by the promising work done so far, but much more work remains. We look forward to continuing our efforts to collaborate and support the many tribes, organizers, researchers and Native food producers who are improving Native health through better nutrition.

To learn more about Seeds of Native Health, please visit us online at SeedsOfNativeHealth.org.

SMSC Business Council

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— Seeds of Native Health grantees in action —



Dream of Wild Health (Minnesota) implemented a new teaching kitchen, allowing the farm to offer a new program centered on reconnecting Native American youth and families with Indigenous plants.



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



The College of Menominee Nation's (Wisconsin) Strengthening Menominee Health and Native Food System project included cultivation of a community garden and education for students and elders on the history of traditional Menominee winter squash.



With the support of First Nations Development Institute and Seeds of Native Health, the Igiugig Village (Alaska) is finding new ways to develop sustainable food sources.



Advocacy

The SMSC supports initiatives that encourage Native-led policy change to positively impact dietary health in Indian Country.



Promoting nutrition and health policy efforts – Since 2015, the SMSC and American Heart Association have collaborated on a number of initiatives to address the dietary health crisis in Indian Country, including two Fertile Ground conferences focused on convening national funders and providing greater impetus for advocacy efforts. The SMSC and AHA are also leading a \$1.6 million Fertile Ground Campaign to provide grants, technical assistance, leadership training, and movement building for innovative nutrition and health advocacy efforts.



Laying groundwork for improved early childhood development and nutrition – A collaboration between the SMSC, Better Way Foundation, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Center for Indian Country Development, Healthy Children, Healthy Nations (HCHN) is developing a strategic plan to improve early childhood development and nutrition in Minnesota's Native communities.

This project resulted in the *Charting Pathways on Early Childhood Development and Nutrition for Minnesota's Native Children* report, which outlines a multifaceted framework for action. As the project continues, next steps include establishing a collaborative fund, hosting a statewide conference, and beginning advocacy work.

As part of Healthy Children, Healthy Nations, three convenings with stakeholders from across Minnesota were hosted in 2017. Participants helped identify best practices and promising solutions, determine critical needs, and discuss strategies and funding recommendations.

Supporting healthy foods tribal legislation – Working with First Nations Development Institute, the SMSC contributed \$80,000 in support of the Diné Community Advocacy Alliance's implementation of the Navajo Nation's first-in-the-country junk food tax.

Reducing sugary beverages in Native communities – Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are the most common source of added sugar in children’s diets according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and a contributing factor in the obesity epidemic in Indian Country. The SMSC provided \$250,000 to the Notah Begay III Foundation to expand its healthy beverage initiative, providing resources and advocates for reduced consumption of SSBs and increased consumption of drinking water.

Advancing nutrition and agriculture policy – The next federal Farm Bill will have wide-ranging impact on the 5 million American Indians and Alaskan Natives in the United States. In 2017, the SMSC commissioned *Regaining Our Future*, a groundbreaking report analyzing the risks and opportunities for Indian Country in this massive legislation.

Following the report’s release, the SMSC joined with the Intertribal Agriculture Council, the National Congress of American Indians, and the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative to form the Native Farm Bill Coalition, an advocacy effort with more than 160 member tribes and allied groups to date. The SMSC is the primary funder of the Coalition’s advocacy 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, the Fertile Ground 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

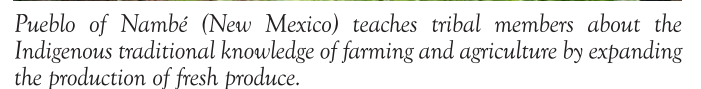
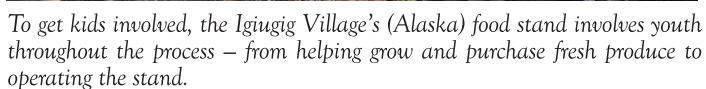


In spring 2018, the Native Farm Bill Coalition hosted a Washington, D.C., fly-in that brought tribal leaders and Native youth to the Capitol to meet with congressional, White House, and USDA officials.



Through Seeds of Native Health, the SMSC has partnered with leading organizations working in health, nutrition and wellness.

Each  represents the location of a Seeds of Native Health grantee.



Strengthening Native food systems and increasing food access –

The SMSC contributed \$1.4 million to First Nations Development Institute and \$1.1 million to the Notah Begay III Foundation as intermediaries to award grants to 51 tribes and Native nonprofits. This re-granting effort launched projects related to food access, food sovereignty, and community capacity-building throughout Indian Country.

Supporting grassroots efforts – The SMSC partnered with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative to create a cadre of 21 Native Food Sovereignty Fellows. These fellows are AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers working with 10 low-resource Native American communities in Alaska, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Washington to help establish and stabilize food sovereignty efforts, food systems, and tribal economies.

Contributing to Minnesota Native communities – Leading up to the 2018 Super Bowl, the SMSC's Seeds of Native Health contributed \$300,000 to the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee Legacy Fund's 52 Weeks of Giving program. This gift made Super Bowl LII Legacy Fund grants to four Native American community projects possible in Minnesota, all related to nutrition and food access.



To address the Native American nutrition crisis, the SMSC partnered with AmeriCorps VISTA and IFAI to support low-resource communities in Indian Country.

"[This] 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



Research

By funding original research projects, the SMSC helps add to the body of knowledge about the health crisis in Indian Country and identify workable solutions.



The Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition series brings together more than 500 attendees each year to discuss Indigenous and academic scientific knowledge on nutrition and food science. It is the only conference series in the world solely dedicated to Indigenous nutrition.

"I think both the traditional world and the scientific community have much to learn from each other. [The Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition] provides the perfect venue for a new type of learning to occur."

- **Donald Warne, M.D., M.P.H.** (Oglala Lakota),
Professor and Chair, Department of Public Health,
North Dakota State University

Bringing together academic and Indigenous knowledge – Beginning in 2016, the Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition has convened hundreds of Indigenous leaders, researchers and practitioners to exchange the latest developments in Native nutrition and food science. This conference is principally funded by the SMSC and co-organized with the University of Minnesota's Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute.

Piloting a nutrition education program – The American Diabetes Association's (ADA) interactive nutrition program "What Can I Eat?" has demonstrated early success in both rural and urban African American communities. The SMSC provided a \$225,000 grant to the ADA to adapt this program in culturally appropriate ways for use in Native communities. Pilot programs are planned with six sites across Indian Country.

Supporting Healthy Futures in Indian Country – Johns Hopkins University's Center for American Indian Health works in partnership with tribes to improve communities' health and wellbeing. The SMSC contributed a \$250,000 grant toward the development of Healthy Futures, a pilot program designed to improve health and nutrition in tribal communities.

Developing model of food and agriculture laws – The SMSC provided \$250,000 in initial funding to the University of Arkansas School of Law’s Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative for its landmark project to develop a comprehensive set of model food and agriculture codes, for customization and adoption by tribal nations.

Growing the next generation of Native nutrition leaders – Talent development is critical to Indian Country feeding itself. Partnering with the University of Minnesota and University of Arkansas, the SMSC has provided \$250,000 to fund a study identifying obstacles and opportunities for encouraging and training future Native leaders in the fields of food production, food science, nutrition, and agriculture.



The Squaxin Community Garden Project from the Squaxin Island Tribe (Washington) resulted in the development of a tribal community garden to sustainably improve food security and health outcomes for the community.



Choctaw Fresh Produce (Mississippi) hired an ambassador to lead coordination of training in organic growing, farm tours, mobile market, on-reservation sales to tribal programs, surveying community needs/desires relative to foods grown, and more.



Leveraging new resources

By creating the Seeds of Native Health campaign, the SMSC has concentrated some of its own charitable giving around an urgent problem in Indian Country. This campaign has enabled the SMSC to collaborate with expert partners, helping further their work and expanding the possibilities of supporting large, consequential projects. It also has elevated other philanthropic organizations' understanding of the needs of Native peoples.

The SMSC has combined funds with the American Heart Association and Better Way Foundation for major projects in Native nutrition advocacy and early childhood development and nutrition respectively. Other partners—First Nations Development Institute, the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, the Notah Begay III Foundation, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Minnesota, and the American Diabetes Association—have successfully used leading gifts by the SMSC to help leverage additional investments from others interested in solving the Native food and nutrition crisis. Funders involved in major SMSC-supported projects include AmeriCorps VISTA; Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota; the Christensen Fund; the Ellen and Michael Kullman family; MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger; the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; the W.K. Kellogg Foundation; and the Walmart Foundation.



The Nooksack Indian Tribe (Washington) established a local community garden and other education opportunities for tribal members.



Red Lake Nation (Minnesota) hosts educational trainings for tribal members on growing their own food and best practices for healthy living, as well as a pre-diabetes program.



Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation (South Dakota) started the Food Sovereignty Initiative that serves the Oglala Lakota Nation. As part of this project, community education workshops were launched for tribal youth and families to learn about sustainable food and agriculture.



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Thank you to all of our partners who are committed to improving Native nutrition.

