

Final report | 2020



Seeds *of* Native Health

A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition

A philanthropic initiative of the
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community





Seeds of Native Health has been an \$11 million campaign to improve Native nutrition now and into the future.

A tradition of helping others

(or *wo'okiye* in Dakota) has defined the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) for generations. Kinship, community, and supporting each other has long been a part of our tribe's heritage.

The SMSC continues to honor that tradition today. Our tribe is the largest philanthropic benefactor for Indian Country nationally, and one of the largest charitable givers in Minnesota. We contribute to causes, organizations, and tribes here and across the country.

There are several large-scale challenges affecting Native Americans across the country. But everywhere you turn, there are Native people who apply innovation, vision, and grassroots determination within their communities to overcome these challenges.

This became especially evident to the SMSC over the past decade. As our tribe began to focus on improving the health and well-being of our tribal members, we learned more about the widespread dietary health crisis across Indian Country. Poor nutrition is a leading factor in why Native Americans have the worst health disparities of any group in the United States.

At the same time, we also learned about the many efforts being implemented in Indian Country to restore healthful diets. The SMSC recognized the promise and fundamental importance of this work, as well as the need for these projects to receive additional awareness and funding. That is why we launched the Seeds of Native Health philanthropic campaign in 2015.

Seeds of Native Health has been an \$11 million campaign to improve Native nutrition now and into the future. Our work has focused on three key components – grant-making, research

and advocacy – to support tribal food and agriculture policy, community-based nutrition programs, and research that helps move the needle on improving dietary health.

Over the past five years, this campaign has resulted in important successes for tribes and Native communities. We co-lead a national coalition which achieved historic wins in federal legislation, benefiting Native tribes and agriculture producers. We supported the establishment and expansion of nutrition education and community engagement across Indian Country. We launched a unique academic conference series devoted to Indigenous nutrition, and a new academic journal section showcasing the best scholarship in the field. We brought new funders to the table to augment our efforts to invest in the field of Native nutrition.

We are thankful to our many partners for their collaboration in our campaign, and to our grantees for their work to realize the dream of restored dietary health in Native communities. Our work together has led to Seeds of Native Health benefiting hundreds of tribes, and has helped strengthen the health and well-being of Native Americans across the country.



The SMSC Business Council. Left to right: Chairman Charles R. Vig, Secretary/Treasurer Rebecca Crooks-Stratton, and Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson.

SMSC Business Council

Chairman Charles R. Vig

Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson

Secretary/Treasurer Rebecca Crooks-Stratton



A Community Initiative



Lori Watso and Jesse Chase, SMSC Members and campaign chairs during 2015-2017 and 2018-2019, respectively.

It has been an honor to serve

as the chairs of Seeds of Native Health, seeing this important campaign grow over the years and positively impact so many communities and lives. Our efforts have resulted in national and tribal legislation, new community programs, innovative research, and a greater national awareness of the dietary health crisis which still afflicts much of Indian Country.

These successes wouldn't have been possible without the grassroots efforts that Seeds of Native Health has been proud to support.

As campaign chairs, we've had the privilege of working alongside organizations and tribes across Indian Country doing truly amazing work. We are grateful to each and every one of these partners, whose work is summarized on the following pages.

This campaign's focus – to improve the health and well-being of Native nations and communities – is important to our tribe. Many of our Community Members have been directly involved in the success of Seeds of Native Health, attending conferences, helping evaluate grant applications, and making site visits near and far. We thank them for their commitment to this campaign. And we thank everyone in our Community for their generosity toward the critical work of inspiring “food people” through Native America.

Seeds of Native Health Chairs

Lori Watso and Jesse Chase



Community Members visited with Lower Sioux Indian Community staff who received Seeds of Native Health funding. Left to right: SMSC Seeds of Native Health Chair Jesse Chase, SMSC Member Ellen Zacharias, Lower Sioux Registered Dietitian and Diabetes Coordinator Stacy Hammer, SMSC Sharing Resources Work Group Chair Allene Ross, Lower Sioux Community Health and Social Service Director and Clinic CEO Darin Prescott, and SMSC Charitable Giving Coordinator Chad Poitra.



SMSC Members Danielle Johnson and Ellen Zacharias visited NativeVision, a program in tribal communities across the Southwest that was funded by Seeds of Native Health.

"Over the past five years, the Seeds of Native Health campaign has helped elevate a critical effort toward improved nutrition in Indian Country. Through [the Native nutrition] conference, its grant-making and partnerships with other Native and non-Native organizations, and its leadership of the Native Farm Bill Coalition, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community has made an important and lasting contribution to the dietary health and food sovereignty of Indian Country."

- Peggy Flanagan
Minnesota Lt. Governor





Advocacy

Supporting Native American-led policy change to positively impact dietary health in Indian Country.

Native Farm Bill Coalition

Every five years, Congress passes a Farm Bill. This massive piece of legislation funds and sets policy on a wide variety of national programs ranging from nutrition and agriculture to conservation and forestry.

Indian Country has an enormous interest in this legislation. Despite recent tribal progress to restore Native food systems, many tribes still rely heavily on federal programs to feed themselves.

In previous Farm Bills, Native nations and producers have struggled to get Congress to understand and act on their needs. As federal policymakers began preparing a new Farm Bill in late 2016, it became clear that Indian Country would once again be vulnerable.

To advance Native interests, the SMSC funded and helped form the Native Farm Bill Coalition with the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC), the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), and our research partner, the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI).



IFAI Director Colby Duren, Coalition co-chair Zach Ducheneaux, Seeds of Native Health Chair Jesse Chase, and NCAI Vice President of Government Relations Jake Schellinger outside the Senate-House conference committee on the 2018 Farm Bill.

Regaining Our Future Report

As a project of Seeds of Native Health, the SMSC commissioned a report to examine the risks and opportunities for tribes in the 2018 Farm Bill. The report, *Regaining Our Future*, was written by two leading experts on federal Native food policy, Janie Hipp and Colby Duren, and was publicly released by the SMSC in June 2017.

The report was immediately recognized as an important resource by Native leaders and Members of Congress. The response stimulated a desire to organize a larger Native advocacy effort, which led to the formation of the Native Farm Bill Coalition.





The National Congress of American Indians gave the SMSC the 2019 Special Recognition Award to honor the tribe's leadership of the Native Farm Bill Coalition. SMSC Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson accepted the award on the SMSC's behalf.

The Coalition's goal was to give tribes and Native producers a stronger, more united voice to advance a common Farm Bill agenda.

Since the Coalition's launch in October 2017, more than 170 tribes, intertribal groups, other Native organizations, and non-Native allies have become members of the Native Farm Bill Coalition. Together, the members developed the Coalition's priorities for the Farm Bill and kept Congress focused on tribal concerns.

Thanks to the Coalition's research, education, and advocacy at the U.S. Capitol and across the country, the 2018 Farm Bill was signed into law in December 2018 with 63 separate provisions that benefit Indian Country, an unprecedented degree of success.

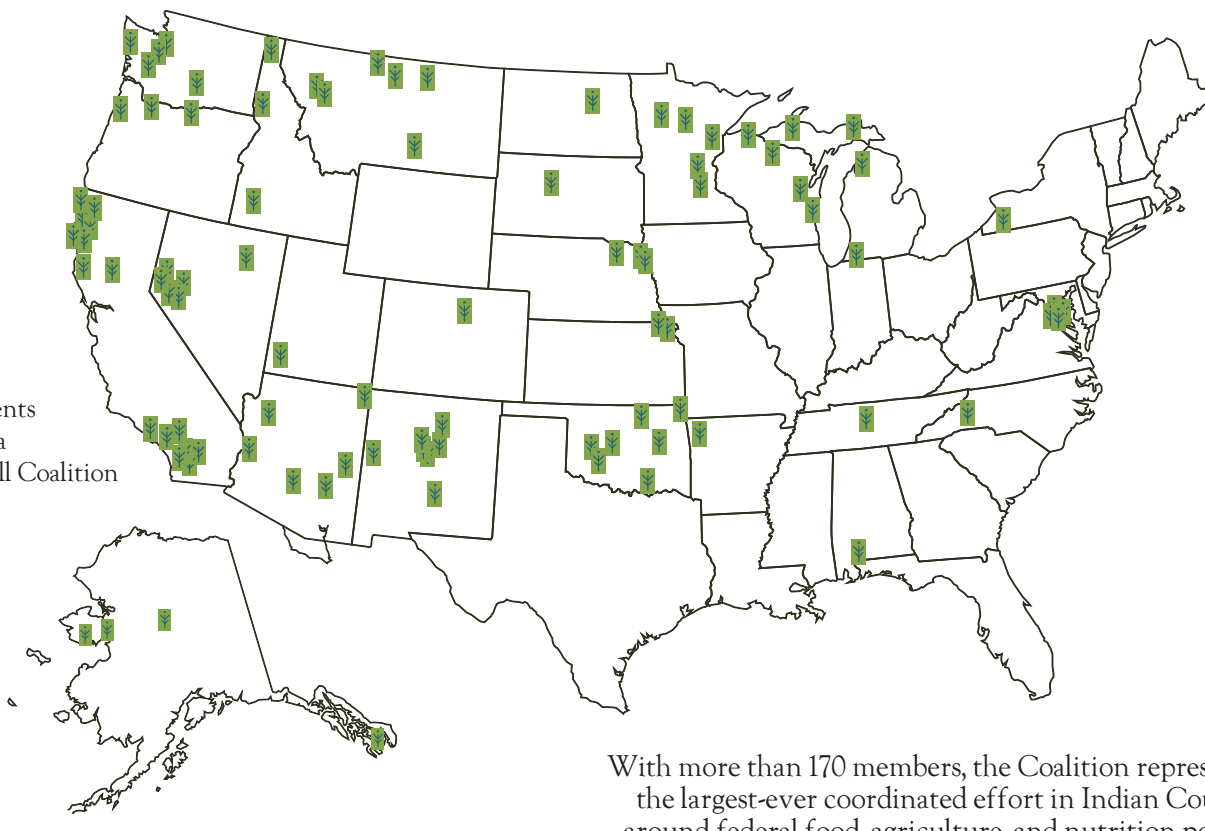
These 63 provisions impact everything from strengthening tribal self-governance and the management of nutrition programs to investing in economic development opportunities.

Following this historic accomplishment in the 2018 Farm Bill, the Coalition remained active in 2019 to work with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on the implementation of the new tribal authorities and access under the Farm Bill. It also continued to educate policymakers on Native nutritional and agricultural issues in the new Congress, assisting in oversight activities, and urging Congress to further expand its recognition of tribal self-determination authority in USDA programs.



Thanks to the Coalition, the 2018 Farm Bill features 63 separate provisions that benefit Indian Country, something never before accomplished.

Each  represents the location of a Native Farm Bill Coalition member.



With more than 170 members, the Coalition represents the largest-ever coordinated effort in Indian Country around federal food, agriculture, and nutrition policy.



Members of the Native Farm Bill Coalition visited the White House to successfully advocate for Native interests in the 2018 Farm Bill.

"Congress has listened to Indian Country as never before and delivered on many of our requests."

- **Ross Racine**

Former executive director, Intertribal Agriculture Council,
and co-chair of the Native Farm Bill Coalition

"Native American tribes win big in the new farm bill."

- **Minnesota Public Radio, December 2018**



Coalition Focus Areas

The Coalition's work included the following components.

Research

The Coalition's research partner, IFAI, developed briefing papers, analysis documents, and other research materials for tribal officials and representatives to use.

Education

The *Regaining Our Future* report was a major effort to educate members of Congress, their staff, and USDA staff who were unfamiliar with Native nutrition and food production. The Coalition also educated tribal officials on issues at stake through email updates, action alerts, webinars, and panel discussions throughout 2018.

Advocacy

Throughout 2017-18 congressional negotiations on the Farm Bill, Coalition members were regularly in contact with congressional leaders, agriculture committee members, and their own senators and representatives, advocating for Coalition priorities as well as their own specific needs.



Coalition co-chair and SMSC Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson attended the Farm Bill signing ceremony at the White House on December 20, 2018.



Coalition members with staff for U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM).

Water First! Initiative

Sugar-sweetened beverages, such as soft drinks and energy drinks, are the most common source of added sugar in children's diets. Frequent consumption of added sugar is associated with obesity. Because more than 45% of Native children ages two to five years old are obese, reducing their consumption of sugary beverages is critical.

The SMSC provided \$250,000 to the Notah Begay III Foundation to address this issue. The funding helped expand the foundation's Water First! campaign – an initiative to reduce Native children's consumption of sugary beverages and increase their access to and intake of safe drinking water.



Seeds of Native Health Chair Jesse Chase spoke at the Notah Begay III Foundation's Healthy Beverage Summit in 2018. This summit brought together tribes, organizations, and agencies to explore how to reduce the consumption of sugary drinks and promote the consumption of safe drinking water and breastfeeding.

Promoting Healthy Beverages

The funding helped the foundation:

- Provide micro-grants to tribes and Native-led organizations in Minnesota and Washington.
- Expand its Zero to 60 Challenge, an activity that encourages kids to switch sugar-sweetened beverages with water.
- Host two Healthy Beverage Summits in fall 2018 and 2019.
- Develop informational resources for tribes, schools, and community organizations.



Fertile Ground



Early in the Seeds of Native Health campaign, the SMSC joined forces with Voices for Healthy Kids, an initiative of the American Heart Association (AHA), to address the health crisis in Indian Country. Since then, the tribe and AHA have partnered on a series of important grant-making projects and national convenings.

Movement building

The SMSC-AHA partnership first began in 2015 with a roundtable gathering (Fertile Ground I) of 41 philanthropic funders from across the country to address the need for a national framework to solve the complex Native nutrition crisis. It was followed by a large-scale conference (Fertile Ground II) the next year, which explored specific advocacy opportunities and ways to build technical assistance, training, and other support Native organizations needed to succeed.

Grant-making

As a result of the Fertile Ground gatherings, the SMSC and AHA further collaborated in grant-making to tribes, Native-led organizations, and projects that improve the health and nutrition of Native communities.

Through the competitive Fertile Ground Grant Program, the American Indian Cancer Foundation, SMSC, and AHA jointly awarded \$175,000 in health grants to five Native American organizations. The \$35,000 grants supported innovative nutrition and health-focused advocacy efforts across the country, from New Mexico to Wisconsin to Washington.



Representatives from philanthropic organizations gathered for the Fertile Ground I convening in October 2015.

Additionally, the SMSC and AHA later created the Fertile Ground Policy Innovation Fund – the largest fund ever created for grant-making in direct support of Native nutrition and health policy work. The \$1.6 million fund provided grants for projects designed to build community power and advance policy systems and change at the tribal, local, state, and national levels to benefit Native health.

Leadership development

Another area of SMSC-AHA work was leadership development. To expand the strategic and tactical knowledge of Native policy advocates, two Fertile Ground Leadership Institutes were held in 2018, in the Twin Cities and Seattle. They provided free, advanced training for 50 Native American leaders working toward health and dietary well-being in their communities. It provided tools for effective, strategic campaign planning and navigating the historic trauma which hinders efforts to fully engage Native communities. The Native Organizers Alliance and the American Indian Cancer Foundation served as lead trainers.



Stakeholders participated in the Fertile Ground II convening in 2016.

Through the Fertile Ground initiatives, 50 Native leaders received leadership development training, five Native-led organizations received funding, and two national conferences convened stakeholders to address the health crisis in Indian Country.



Healthy Diné Nation Act

Informed by research showing that taxation of unhealthy foods may reduce their consumption, the Navajo Nation authorized an additional 2% sales tax on unhealthy foods and sugar-sweetened beverages in 2014. This was the first junk food tax ever to be enacted in the country, with proceeds used to fund community-based wellness programs. It also removed the sales tax on healthy foods on the reservation, such as produce and water.

Launched with a challenge grant from the SMSC, 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 included the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Christensen Fund, and an anonymous private donor, providing a combined gift of \$262,000. With this support, DCAA works 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.



Tribal government budget and finance meeting to discuss the new Healthy Diné Nation Act Budget.



Diné youth pick produce at the STAR School garden in Flagstaff, Arizona. In addition to supporting the Healthy Diné Nation Act, Seeds of Native Health also supported the creation of the school's garden with a \$40,000 grant.

"This collaboration is a vital part of our work to empower our communities and improve health outcomes. It builds capacity so that our tribal government's work is more efficient, consistent, and supported."

- Denise Livingston

Community health advocate, Diné Community Advocacy Alliance





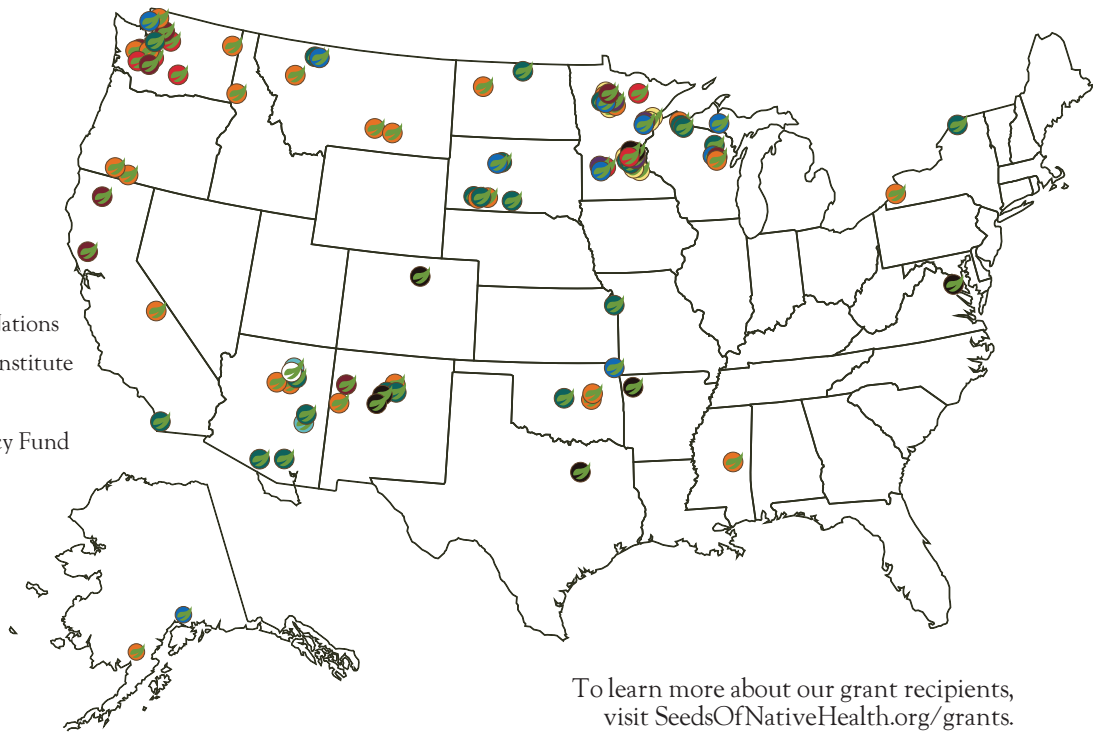
Grant-making

Partnering with leading organizations working in health,
nutrition and wellness.

Seeds of Native Health funding has benefited grantees across the country, supporting projects such as creating organic tribal gardens, agriculture, and policy implementation.

Each symbol represents the location of a Seeds of Native Health grantee:

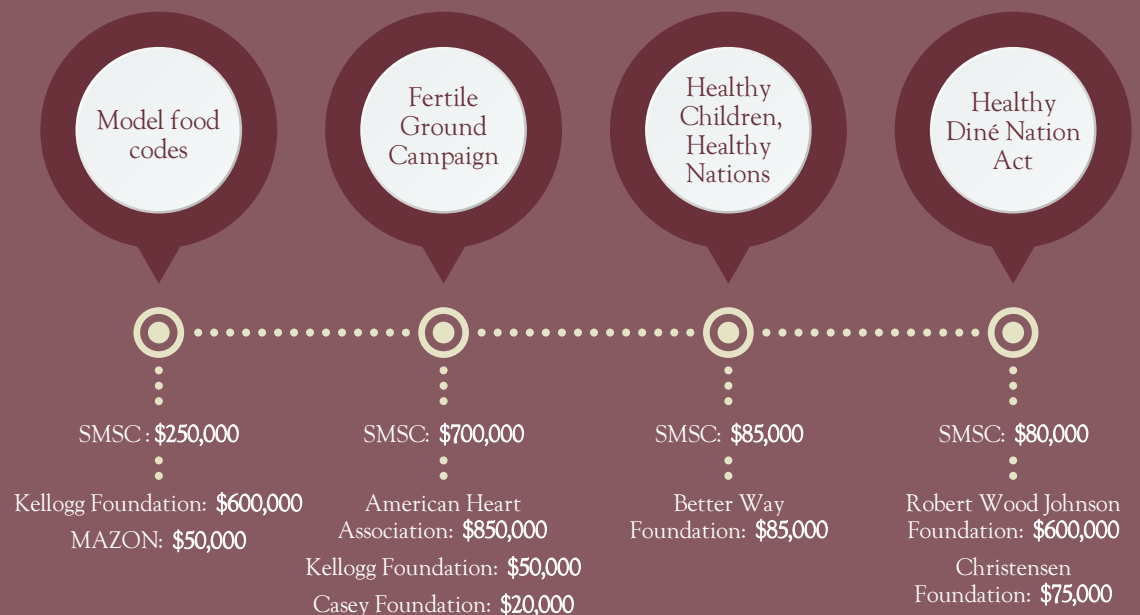
-  Water First! Initiative
-  Native Vision pilot program
-  Fertile Ground policy
-  Healthy Children, Healthy Nations
-  First Nations Development Institute
-  Notah Begay III Foundation
-  Minnesota Super Bowl Legacy Fund
-  AmeriCorps VISTA
-  Healthy Diné Nation Act
-  Additional organizations



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

Encouraging Investments

Seeds of Native Health has enabled the SMSC to collaborate with expert partners, helping to further their work and expanding the possibilities of supporting large, consequential projects. It has also elevated other philanthropic organizations' understanding of the needs of Native peoples.



National Impact on a Grassroots Level

Hiring a food ambassador

Building capacity in an organization or tribal government can be a necessary step toward new and expanded health programs. That is why Seeds of Native Health grants have dedicated staff.

Thanks to a \$33,418 grant, Choctaw Fresh Produce in Mississippi was able to bring on an ambassador to help maximize the benefits of the organization's organic food operations for Choctaw tribal members, particularly youth and low-income members. The role includes coordinating gardening trainings, farm tours, and a mobile market.



A grant to Choctaw Fresh Produce allowed the tribe to hire a food ambassador, who coordinates gardening trainings, mobile marketing, and other services.

"By hiring a local food ambassador, we have been able to tailor our organic farming operation to better meet the needs of our tribal members and strengthen our ability to improve the health and well-being of our tribe."

-John Hendrix

General manager, Choctaw Fresh Produce

Through regranting, the SMSC has provided more than \$2.5 million toward grants throughout Indian Country.

Reducing food toxins

Ensuring healthy food for tribal communities isn't just about what you plant, but also how it is grown. In recent years, member tribes of the Northern California Tribal Court Coalition expressed concerns over unregulated chemical pesticides on and around their tribal lands. In response, the coalition created the Tribal Food Purity Project which received a \$37,761 grant from Seeds of Native Health. The project led to drafted tribal legislation to limit the release of chemical toxins and provide for enforcement mechanisms. This legislation is considered critical for the tribes to safeguard the health and well-being of its members, and ensure that land- and water-based food resources can be safely harvested.



Members of tribes involved with the Northern California Tribal Court Coalition making acom soup in Orleans, California.

About regranting

Seeds of Native Health has partnered with the First Nations Development Institute and the Notah Begay III Foundation to administer \$2.5 million in grants. These grants have benefited dozens of tribes and organizations across Indian Country – including the Painted Desert Demonstration Project and Northern California Tribal Court Coalition projects detailed on these pages.

"The policy guides and legislation made possible by this project have helped to protect the food, water, land, and culture in our tribal communities. This is important as World Renewal people are charged with maintaining the integrity and health of our ancestral territory, and also the sovereignty of the coalition's member tribal nations. In large part because of this foundational work, the Yurok Tribe has declared the Klamath River to be a legal person under its laws."

- Stephanie Dolan

Executive director, Northern California Tribal Court Coalition



Engaging Youth



Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe received a \$100,000 grant for a food education truck.

“With funding from the SMSC’s Seeds of Native Health, the Super Bowl Legacy Fund’s 52 Weeks of Giving will help all 11 Native American communities in Minnesota take their nutritional destinies into their own hands and improve the overall health of their people.”

- **Charles R. Vig and Maureen Bausch**
SMSC Chairman and CEO of the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee, Star Tribune op-ed, 2017

Super Bowl grants

Leading up to the 2018 Super Bowl in Minneapolis, the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee launched a year-long philanthropic effort that awarded 52 communities with grants to improve the health and wellness of young people in Minnesota. The Seeds of Native Health campaign contributed \$500,000 toward the fund specifically for grants to Minnesota tribes, including the Upper Sioux Community.

Through the Super Bowl Host Committee Legacy Fund, the SMSC provided \$500,000 to benefit Native children in Minnesota.

Upper Sioux Community

Native children are the future of Indian Country, and it's important to engage them in efforts surrounding healthy food and nutrition. That is why Seeds of Native Health has benefited several grassroots projects that engage Native youth, such as a \$100,000 grant to the Upper Sioux Community's healthy foods initiative, *Zani Woyute*.

The *Zani Woyute* project:

- Increases youth awareness and involvement of where food comes from
- Increases access to fresh and healthy foods
- Nurtures young garden practitioners
- Furthers capacity, effort, and sustainability in the tribe's food sovereignty



The \$100,000 grant to the Upper Sioux Community funded education and healthy food access for Native youth.

"Zani Woyute – healthy foods – is embedded in Dakota values, language, and traditions. We are excited to be able to further engage our youngest community members to foster the type of intentional and collaborative health and wellness initiatives that they, in turn, will lead one day."

- Kevin Jensvold

Tribal Chairman, Upper Sioux Community

This grant supported gardening, cooking and preserving activities for summer youth and year-round after-school programs on the reservation.



Investing in Childhood Nutrition



Thanks to a Seeds of Native Health grant, the First Nations Development Institute was able to provide a \$40,000 grant to the Bishop Paiute tribe in California. The tribe used the funds to build farm sustainability, hold traditional food workshops, and support the use of local resources and land management.

Dedicated to serving Native youth, the Seeds of Native Health program partnered with Better Way Foundation and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis' Center for Indian Country Development (CICD) to form Healthy Children, Healthy Nations (HCHN). This initiative focused on improving early childhood development (ECD) and childhood nutrition in Minnesota's Native communities in several ways, including this \$25,000 grant to the American Indian Family Center.

Early in the initiative in 2017, HCHN hosted three convenings with stakeholders. These focused on identifying best practices for Native ECD and nutrition; determining critical needs; and building consensus around strategies to pursue. The following year, HCHN hosted a statewide conference to prioritize issues and create defined action plans.

These convenings resulted in a report that outlined a multifaceted framework to improve Native ECD and nutrition: Charting Pathways on Early Childhood Development and Nutrition for Minnesota's Native Children. The report identified focus areas and next steps for the initiative.

To move this work forward, the SMSC and Better Way Foundation established the Healthy Children, Healthy Nations Fund. This was the first-ever donor-advised fund dedicated to supporting the innovation and expansion of early childhood development and childhood nutrition programs in Minnesota's Native communities. With support from the SMSC, Better Way Foundation, and Casey Family Programs, the fund has awarded more than \$200,000 to 10 tribes and Native nonprofits in the state, supporting everything from breastfeeding workshops to Native language education.

American Indian Family Center

Improving nutrition and celebrating Native culture go hand-in-hand in building whole, healthy Native children, families and communities. That is why many projects supported by Seeds of Native Health focused on both components, such as a \$25,000 grant to the American Indian Family Center in Minneapolis for developing an urban, intergenerational healing garden.

The nonprofit center received funding to plan the garden in an initiative to improve nutrition education, food self-efficacy, and food insecurity for the Native children and families they serve. The garden is about reestablishing Indigenous, land-based, and sustainable health practices to promote not just physical health but also emotional, mental, and spiritual health.



Healthy Children, Healthy Nations convened experts in the field of Native early childhood development and nutrition in May 2017.

“The intergenerational healing garden was a youth-led decolonization effort of local food systems guided by traditional ecological teachings from the elders for achieving food sovereignty in an urban context. The intergenerational gathering also facilitated the recognition of food as medicine through youth-led elder engagement.”

- Koushik Paul

Volunteer, American Indian Family Center

“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



Sovereignty Fellows

"[Seeds of Native Health] merits praise for this pragmatic approach to improving public health in often-overlooked locations."

- Star Tribune editorial, January 2017

A key part of Seeds of Native Health is supporting localized efforts to improve Native nutrition and food sovereignty. A prime example of this work is the Native Food Sovereignty Fellowship – a cadre of 21 fellows working with 10 low-resource Native American communities across the country to help establish and stabilize food sovereignty efforts, food systems, and tribal economies.

The SMSC partnered with the Corporation for National Community Service and the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative to develop this AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer program. The tribe provided a \$200,000 gift to help fund the program, the first time in VISTA's history that a tribe provided funding to deploy volunteers across the country.

VISTA members provided much-needed grassroots capacity to help reduce the number of poor and food-insecure communities in Indian Country.

21 fellows served 10 low-resource Native communities from Alaska to North Carolina.



Seeds of Native Health provided \$200,000 to fund the AmeriCorps VISTA Native Sovereignty Fellowship program, which supported 21 fellows working with 10 low-resource Native communities.



Left to right: Conference on Native American Nutrition planning committee member Loren BirdRattler, Native American Sovereignty Fellowship organizer Janie Hipp, and SMSC Chairman Charles R. Vig.

“Many tribes struggle to access healthy food in their communities and develop food systems. This effort was an innovative step to build capacity and support tribes at the ground level as they work toward improved health and nutrition.”

- Janie Hipp

CEO, Native American Agriculture Fund



Sovereignty Fellows attended the Third Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition in 2018. They are pictured here with Seeds of Native Health Chair Jesse Chase, SMSC Chairman Charles R. Vig, and SMSC Vice-Chairman Keith B. Anderson.





Research

Funding original research projects to help add to the body of knowledge about health and nutrition in Indian Country.

Model Food Codes

Developing food and agriculture laws allows tribal nations to better plan their nutrition and economic development destinies and assert their tribal sovereignty overall.

To aid tribes as they draft this complex and comprehensive legislation, the SMSC provided a leading \$250,000 grant to the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas to complete a landmark set of model food and agriculture laws.

The Model Tribal Food and Agriculture Code Project is a resource for tribal governments, providing them with a set of model laws for review, customization, adoption, and implementation.

Following the SMSC's lead gift, additional funders included MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, Agua Fund, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

These landmark model laws facilitate tribal agricultural production, food systems development, and health outcomes improvements.



Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative staff presented Seeds of Native Health Chair Jesse Chase and Secretary/Treasurer Rebecca Crooks-Stratton with the two-volume model food and agriculture codes at the Fourth Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition in 2019.

"This landmark model code project is an invaluable resource, one that supports tribal nations as they exert their inherent sovereignty and develop food and agriculture policies tailored to their priorities and needs."

- Steven Krikava

Minnesota representative of the MAZON board and member at the Adath Jeshurun Congregation in Minnetonka, Minnesota

Conference on Native American Nutrition

Across Indian Country there are talented individuals working to address the dietary health crisis. Every day, tribal leaders, researchers, activists, and practitioners conduct studies and build programs to restore food sovereignty and improve nutrition.

To gather these expert voices, the SMSC partnered with the University of Minnesota's Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute to create the annual Conference on Native American Nutrition. This is the only academic conference series in the world devoted solely to the food and nutrition of Indigenous peoples.

Each year, the conference focuses on the current state of Indigenous and academic scientific knowledge about Native nutrition, dietary health, and food science, and identifies new areas of work needed.



Elders participate on a panel at the Fourth Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition in 2019.



Research poster presenters at the Third Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition in 2018.

More than 1,500 tribal officials, researchers, practitioners, funders, and others have attended the conference since 2016.

"I am a practicing dietitian of over 30 years and no other conference has impacted me or uplifted me as much as this conference. It is also the only nutrition conference I've attended or heard of where Indigenous peoples are as honored as those who conduct academic nutrition research."

- Sarah Miracle

SNAP-Ed program manager, Chickasaw Nation



Promoting Scholarship in Native Nutrition



Many tribes and Indigenous communities around the world are collaborating with academic researchers to develop innovative solutions to support traditional food systems and nutrition. Yet these studies and projects have never had a dedicated journal focused exclusively on this topic.

To give this scholarship a proper platform, the SMSC provided a grant to the University of Minnesota's Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute to fund a new section in the Current Developments in Nutrition journal. The Food and Nutrition of Indigenous Peoples section highlights work from both academic and Indigenous academic perspectives by publishing quality research studies on Native food and nutrition.

The SMSC's funding covers the publication costs for authors unable to provide these funds, making the papers free to publish and free to access for researchers and readers alike.

The journal section highlights the best scholarship related to the food and nutrition of Indigenous peoples.

In addition to funding the Conference on Native American Nutrition and the Food and Nutrition of Indigenous Peoples journal section, Seeds of Native Health has provided funding for the following University of Minnesota projects.

Reconnecting the Wisdom Within

The University of Minnesota study, Reconnecting the Wisdom Within, analyzes the obstacles between Western academic research and Native American traditional knowledge and experiences relating to food and nutrition.

Reconnecting the Wisdom Within covers three focus areas:

- A framework for mindful critical reflection in academia
- The importance of cultural awareness in the fields of food and nutrition
- The strategy of cultural interfacing to help bring different communities together around shared goals

The study provides actionable recommendations for academic researchers and Native American practitioners to achieve more respectful cultural exchanges.

Research database

Navigating research on Native nutrition can be challenging, as it's not always easy to find relevant studies and experts. That is why the SMSC funded the development and launch of two publicly accessible, comprehensive, and searchable databases – one a multi-disciplinary bibliography relating to Native American nutrition and the other a database of leading experts in relevant fields.



A basket of fresh produce from Wozupi Tribal Gardens in Prior Lake, Minnesota.

The public databases allow tribal officials, Native practitioners, and academic researchers alike to find useful research on Native nutrition as well as experts in the field.



Combating Diabetes with Nutrition

"Thank you to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community for your leadership and continued partnership with the American Diabetes Association. Thanks to partners like you, we are coming together, collaborating, and tackling the biggest health epidemic of our time. We are connected for life, and together we will put an end to this epidemic once and for all."

- Tracey D. Brown

CEO, American Diabetes Association, and person with diabetes

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 15% of Native Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes, a rate higher than other populations. The condition is the fourth leading cause of death of Native people – nearly three times higher than any other U.S. ethnic group.

Nutrition support is needed to combat Type 2 diabetes in Indian Country. Supported by an initial \$225,000 grant from the SMSC, the American Diabetes Association is developing an interactive, culturally appropriate nutrition program specifically for Native people.

The program is being piloted at six sites across Indian Country, and will be expanded and made available to Native communities across the country.

Leveraging the SMSC's grant of \$225,000, the nutrition program received matching grants from Genetech and Vadon Foundation.



Piloting 'NativeVision'

With support from Seeds of Native Health, the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health (CAIH) piloted a comprehensive program designed to improve health and nutrition in tribal communities.

This NativeVision initiative is a nutrition, food access, and physical activity program that was implemented in two southwestern tribal communities over a three-year period.

The pilot program included:

- Nutrition and healthy lifestyles education in school
- Home visits from Native health coaches to teach nutrition, gardening, and physical activity to families
- Health community events and activities
- Rigorous evaluation to determine how to best expand the model to other tribes

Following these successful pilots, the program is being packaged for replication by other tribes across Indian Country.

In addition to a \$250,000 grant from the SMSC, the program also received a \$150,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation and support from the Kullman Family Foundation.



The garden provides fresh food for the NativeVision program and community.



Third grade students learn how to “eat the rainbow” (eat fruits and vegetables of all colors) from NativeVision staff. Here they are making blue corn mush, a traditional Navajo food.

“This project is a critical investment in building 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

Grantees in Action



The Pueblo of Nambe in New Mexico received a \$37,000 Seeds of Native Health grant to hire two farm technicians to expand its agriculture production.

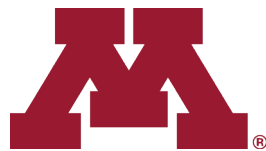


A \$250,000 Seeds of Native Health grant supported in-school curriculum, after-school programming, parent engagement, and community outreach to improve health and nutrition on the Navajo Nation and White Mountain Apache Reservation in Arizona.

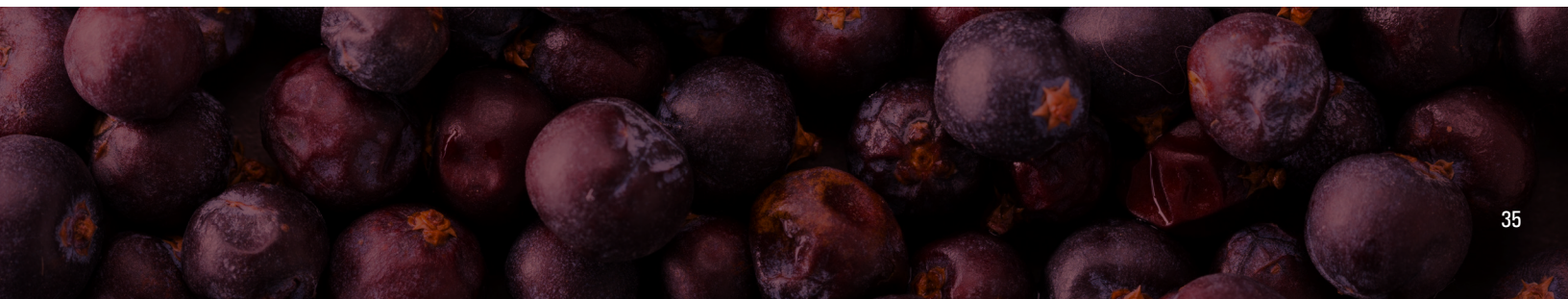


The White Mountain Apache tribe's Ndee Bikiyaa Farm-to-School Initiative in Arizona received a \$40,000 grant from Seeds of Native Health.

Collaborators and Partners



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



Seeds *of* Native Health
A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition

