

A National Intertribal  
Survey and Report

# INTERTRIBAL

FOOD SYSTEMS

Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative

*Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation*

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The Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas School of Law is a multi-disciplinary research, service and educational body.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION ..... 3**

**FOOD SYSTEMS ..... 4**

*Defining Food Systems with a Tribal Focus*

What Is a Food System?

**GATHERING DATA ..... 6**

*Survey Methodology, Team Outreach, and Trends*

About the Scan

About the Nominees

Trends in the Data

**INNOVATORS IN INDIAN COUNTRY ... 11**

2015 Nominees

Defining Innovation

*Themes In Innovation:*

**TRADITIONAL FOOD/FOOD**

**AS MEDICINE ..... 14**

Iroquois White Corn Project

White Earth Agricultural Sustainability Program

Cherokee Heirloom Crop Seed Program

Seeds of Renewal

Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project

Potawot Health Village

Get Fresh Program

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative

HIGHLIGHT: Healthy Roots: Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

*Themes In Innovation:*

**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT..... 23**

Winyan Toka Win Garden and Leading Lady Farmers Market

Chi-Nations Youth Council

Kunsi's Learning Garden

HIGHLIGHT: Cochiti Youth Experience

School Community Garden

Hopi Natwani for Youth

Kohala Center

Zuni Youth Enrichment

HIGHLIGHT: Ka Mála 'O Ehunuikaimalino

*Themes In Innovation:*

**MARKET ACCESS ..... 31**

Lakota Ranch Beginning Farmer & Rancher Program

STAR Farm to School Program

Big Pine Paiute Food Sustainability Project

HIGHLIGHT: Choctaw Fresh

Garden/Market Project

Nambe Pueblo Bison & Farming Project

Padre Mesa Demonstration Ranch

HIGHLIGHT: Intertribal Cooperation and Market Access

HIGHLIGHT: Hasbidito Tri-Community Mobile Farmers Market

Ludy's Qalgadem Tagdaa (Ludy's Fresh Foods)

Increasing Market Access Through Native-Owned Business

HIGHLIGHT: Meskwaki Food Sovereignty Initiative

*Themes In Innovation*

**COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO HEALTH AND HUNGER ..... 45**

- Slim Buttes Agricultural Project
- Tohono O’Odham Community Action
- The People’s Garden
- Healthy Cooking & Eating in Indian Country Schools
- Garden Box Garden
- Seven Arrows Garden
- Healthy Heart
- Hopi Food Cooperative
- HIGHLIGHT: Nature’s Garden

*Collaboration:*

**TRIBAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH NON-TRIBAL PROGRAMS ..... 51**

- Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance
- Tribal Food Summit
- Community Garden
- Skagit River System Cooperative
- Kasaan School Green-House Garden Project
- Tolani Lake Enterprises
- Healthy Traditions
- Elders Traditional Foods Hunter Support Program
- Sustainable Moloka’I
- Traditional Food Guide
- Tribal Bison Farm

*Collaboration:*

**TRIBAL POLICIES FOR NATIVE FOODWAYS ..... 57**

- Native Diabetes Wellness Program
- HIGHLIGHT: Oneida Community Integrated Food Systems

*Collaboration:*

**INTERTRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS ..... 62**

- HIGHLIGHT: Intertribal Agriculture Council
- First Nations Development Institute
- NB3 Foundation
- Indian Land Tenure Foundation

*Collaboration:*

**TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ..... 73**

- Iḷisaḡvik College
- Diné College
- Tohono O’odham Community College
- Haskell Indian Nations University
- Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
- Leech Lake Tribal College
- White Earth Tribal and Community College
- Blackfeet Community College
- Ft. Peck Community College
- Little Big Horn College
- Nebraska Indian Community College
- Little Priest Tribal College
- Navajo Technical University
- Institute of American Indian Arts
- Cankdeska Cikana Community College
- Fort Berthold Community College
- Sitting Bull College
- Turtle Mountain Community College
- United Tribes Technical Colleges
- Oglala Lakota College
- College of Menominee Nation
- Sinte Gleska University
- Sisseton Wahpeton College
- Northwest Indian College

**LESSONS FOR FUNDERS ..... 81**

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# INTRODUCTION

In every corner of Indian Country, motivated people, schools, whole communities and tribal governments are investing time and energy into shaking up current food systems to create healthier choices. It's in these places, among these people, that you see food sovereignty is not just a spoken phrase – it is a deliberate action taken every day.

For far too long, tribal communities have been disconnected from their lands and resources. This has separated many from their traditional foods, putting tribal culture and health in peril. The result has been an increase in chronic illness, such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

The good news is that tribal communities across the country are rewriting this history of injustice and inequity. Tribes are driving change and telling their own stories. At the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI), we are honored to have a small role in this larger narrative. IFAI's work touches on every aspect of food systems change, from policy to business development, to nurturing youth leadership. We give guidance to tribal governments in food and agriculture policies; we lend our expertise in developing food programming; and every year, along with

many partners, we host the Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Summit to engage the next generation in food sovereignty work.

We are humbled to have been asked to do this food scan on behalf of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, which has a long standing commitment to improving health equity and supporting food systems change. This scan is only a snapshot of the good work happening in tribal communities across the country, and could never be complete. Every day things are changing, people are building upon what we know and bettering their local food systems.

We hope, as you read this, you are moved to support tribal-led food systems change. It is only through a shared vision, lifting up each other's efforts and continued collaboration that we will improve the health of communities across Indian Country.

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Sincerely,

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# FOOD SYSTEMS

## Defining food systems with a tribal focus



### WHAT IS A FOOD SYSTEM?

A food system is the interconnected web of people and processes that works to facilitate the growth and distribution of food for a specific community group. The term incorporates and embodies all concepts related to food, from the community’s overall physical and economic health to its sociopolitical and legal underpinnings.

The term “food system,” can be used to describe systems at a micro level – local

food system, a community food system – or it can be used to refer to more macro level systems – a national food system, a global food system. Every food system will be different, with an array of ecologies, climates, geographies, people, opportunities and challenges. But no

“Tribal food systems embody the connections by uniting social, cultural, political, legal, and economic institutions within a Tribal community.”

—VENA A-DAE ROMERO (*Cochiti/Kiowa*)

matter their size or individual moving parts, all human food systems exist inside the same universe – we are many cells of one organism.

Food systems embody the idea that our food and our communities do not exist in a vacuum, that we are linked to one another and to our environment. Our health and happiness depend on access to food. Even in the smallest, most localized food system, every member of the community is a part of the food system, whether they participate by growing crops, herding livestock, packaging, distributing, marketing or selling food, making and defending laws that facilitate food production, or preparing a meal for their families. Thinking of ourselves and our foods as part of a system reminds us of a common humanity and encourages better environmental stewardship.

A tribal food system, then, refers to the connectedness of people, culture, politics, law, and economics that allows for a particular tribal community to provide food for all its members.<sup>1</sup>

The unique role that centuries of traditions play around foods in tribal communities governs how those communities think about and plan for today's tribal food systems. Like any food system, to some degree all people in Indian Country are involved in a tribal food system, but there

are certainly major tribal players who can contribute significantly to the robustness of the overall system. These include tribal governments, leaders, producers, colleges and universities, health entities, food business owners, food distributors, lending and financial services institutions, and of course, the members of the tribal community themselves.

Food systems work is a capacious space, and all can participate. Around the country, tribal people are making change in this space, whether they are working in rural communities with a large land base or in an urban center, where the majority of American Indian people now reside. With so many opportunities to have a dynamic impact on food systems, it is no surprise that around Indian Country and in urban centers, American Indian, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native people are changing food systems in a variety of exciting ways. The diversity of projects profiled in this report parallels the rich diversity of the communities these projects serve, and we are proud to present their work here.

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# GATHERING DATA

## Survey methodology, team outreach and trends

### ABOUT THE SCAN

The 2015 Intertribal Food Systems Scan and Report identifies and shares community-based, food system innovations in tribal communities and throughout Indian Country. By sharing the results offered up by survey respondents and experts in Indian Country food and agriculture, we hope to inform potential funders, food system practitioners and researchers of change-makers in this space.

The survey was designed to run parallel to a national scan conducted by the Wallace Center at Winrock International. Both surveys asked similar questions of respondents, with the Intertribal scan specifically tailored to tribal communities. IFAI began the scan in October 2014 and concluded in January 2015. Most participants opted to complete the scan online, but the IFAI team also offered a paper version for anyone who requested it. Through email newsletters, Facebook and other social media channels, and public announcements at large intertribal

gatherings focused on food and agriculture, the scan reached an audience in excess of 200,000 people, resulting in the nomination of 95 programs/projects. The programs nominated were excellent, yet the IFAI team felt several key players in this space were missing, as did the Wallace Center team for its work. These gaps cannot be fully explained. Perhaps the survey was not the proper means to access communities, particularly in Indian Country. We might never know. Both teams then crowd-sourced additional nominations from various recognized experts in food systems work. For the Intertribal scan, the IFAI team leveraged its own expertise in this area, as well as the experience of groups such as Intertribal Agriculture Council, which has a 30-year history of providing individual assistance to Native farmers and ranchers, and First Nations Development Institute, which has a 30-year history of funding Native programs like those profiled here. These conversations with experts produced a number of additional innovative projects.

## ABOUT THE NOMINEES

Nominations came from all over the country and tracked geographically with Indian Country's landbase: If tribes had a presence in a particular region, then innovative programs from that region showed up in the scan. Geographically, the two greatest regional clusters of nominees hailed from the Southwest and Great Plains: two regions that a great number of Native people call home. <sup>2</sup>

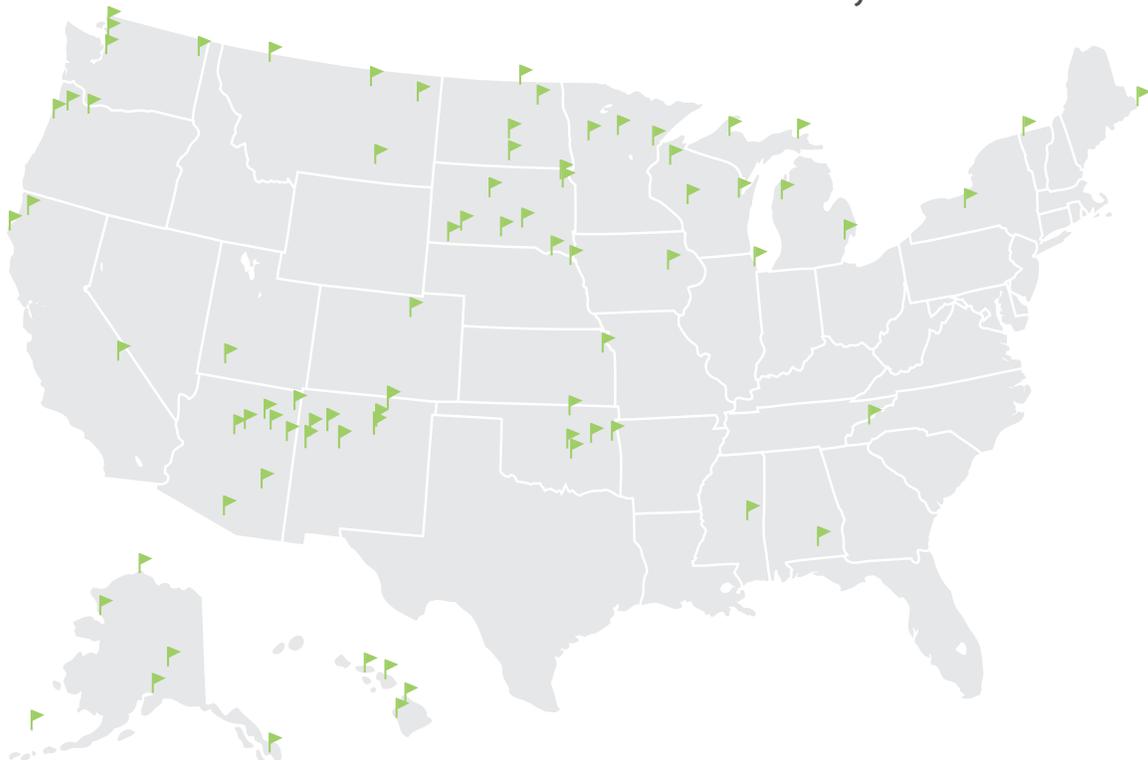
A brief profile of every tribal program nominated, either in the scan or by our team of experts, appears in this report. Throughout the report, nominees with

newer programs also appear as "Programs to Watch." These nominees are committed to making changes in their food systems that will improve the health of their people and communities. With continued support, they will grow and thrive.

The report also features expanded profiles of 10 of the nominees. These 10 programs, which represent a diversity of tribes, programs and geographies, were chosen for their community support and engagement, vision and successes, no matter how preliminary. They represent a fraction of the diversity of action in tribal food systems.

## FOOD SYSTEMS

### Innovations Across the Country

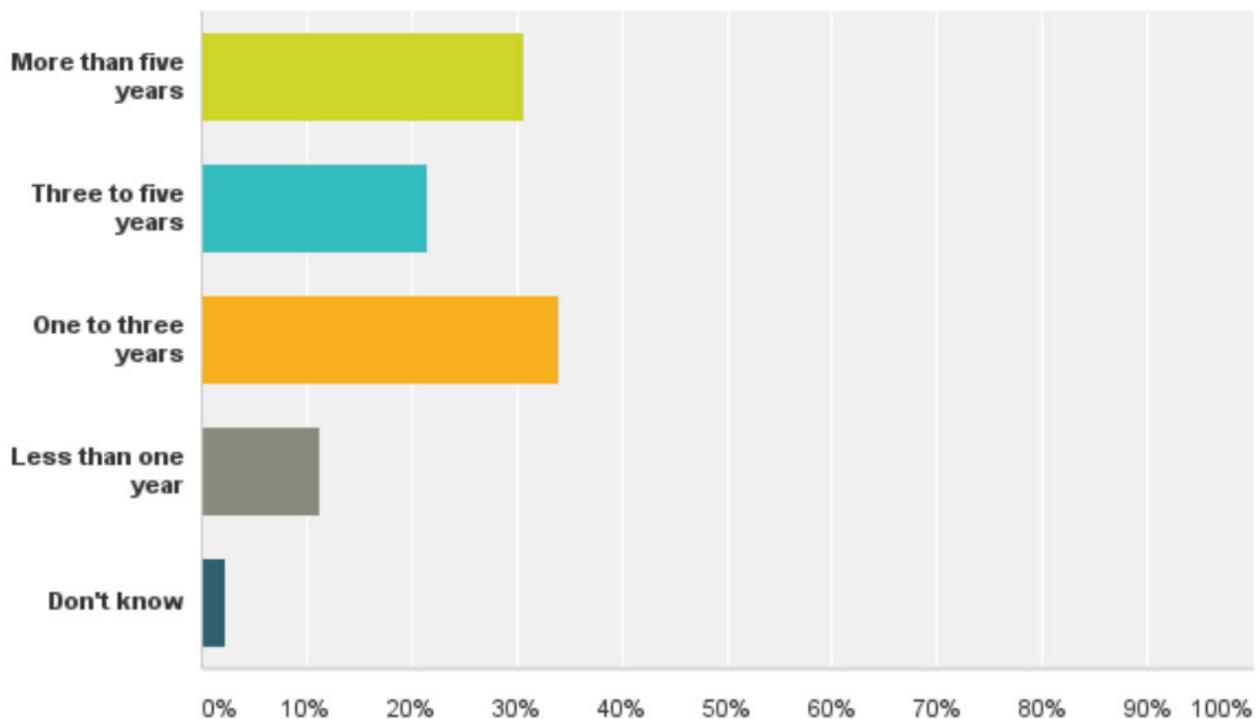


# TRENDS IN THE DATA

## PROGRAM AGE

About a third of the nominees have been working in their communities for five years or more. Many of the nominated programs began their work quite recently – a small majority of the survey respondents indicated that the program they were nominating was between one and three years old – yet are already making a big impact in the communities they serve.

**Q12 What is the approximate age of the project/program:**



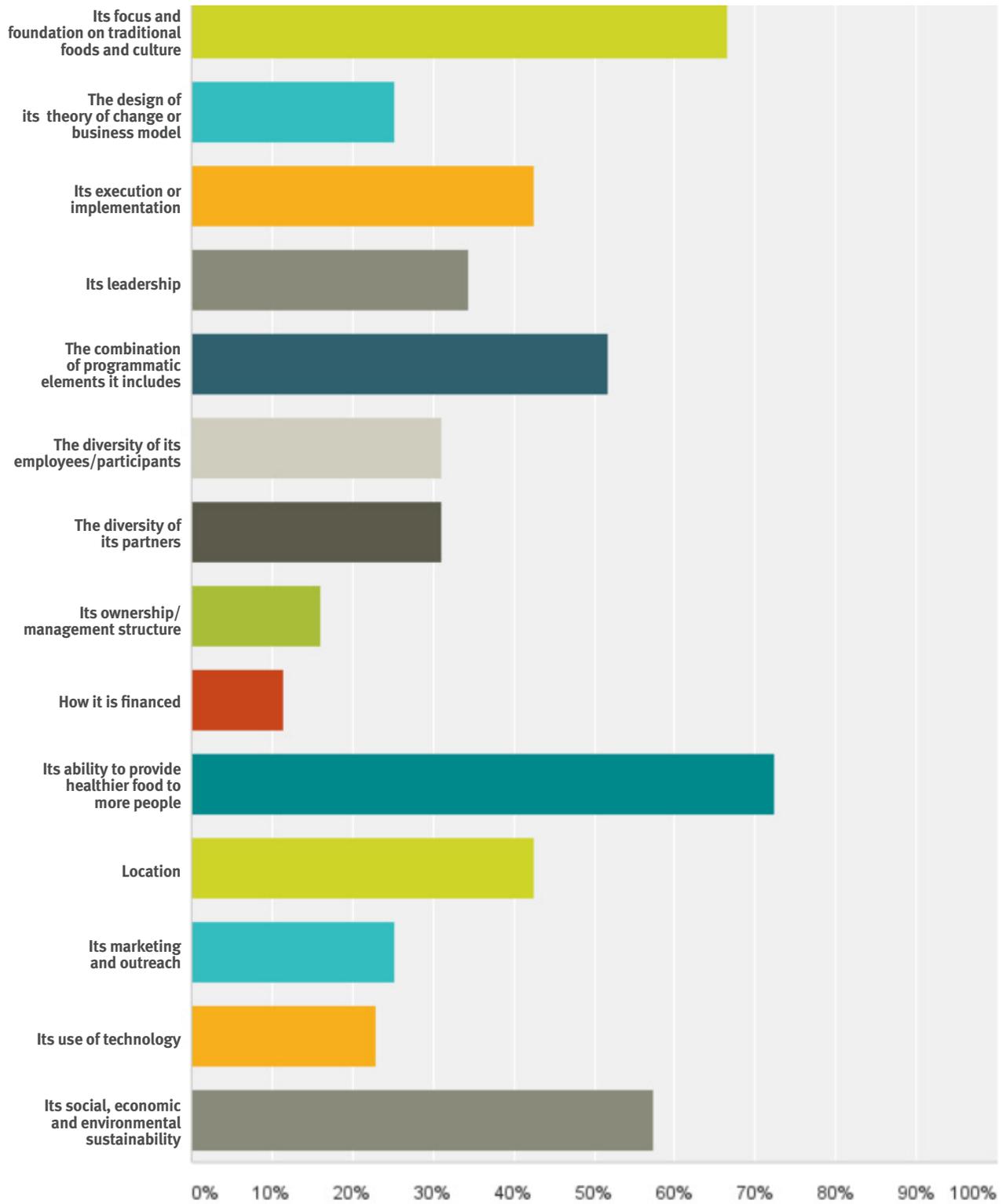
## INNOVATIVE PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

One of the overall goals of the 2015 scan was to help give shape to what it means to be innovative in food systems work in Indian Country.

When asked to indicate which elements made a program innovative, the majority of respondents selected one or more of four characteristics:

- Focus/foundation on traditional foods and culture
- Combination of programmatic elements
- Ability to provide healthier food to more people
- Social, economic and environmental sustainability

The majority of people surveyed felt that these four traits led to innovation. Research into the nominees showed that these are the characteristics that continually surfaced across all nominees. While not every program focuses entirely on one of these characteristics, you can find at least one of these four ideas blossoming in the work of the 2015 nominees. Programs that exhibit one or more of these traits will likely have strong community support, which is crucial to a program's continued success. This survey provides a foundational answer to the question: What is innovation in Indian Country food systems?



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# INNOVATORS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

## 2015 Nominees

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### DEFINING INNOVATION

The 2015 Intertribal National Food Systems Scan yielded an exciting array of projects, all promoting resilient tribal food systems through some truly innovative work. The creativity and programming among all forms of life, it is no surprise that food systems work in Indian Country is focused on making these connections between the old and the new. The projects highlighted in this scan are innovating in four primary ways – several of which track with the of the nominees proved as diverse as the tribal communities they represent, ranging from projects that utilize cutting-edge technology to map water sources to programs that pull together multiple tribes to produce and sustain traditional foods.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INNOVATIVE IN INDIAN COUNTRY FOOD SYSTEMS?

Even with such wonderfully diverse programming, some trends surfaced among survey respondents, with



one key theme omnipresent throughout. **Innovative food systems work in tribal communities focuses on a return to traditional practices to remedy the problems of the present.** Though each project is unique, this celebration of traditional practices shows up in each one. With tribal food systems embodying connections among all forms of life, it is no surprise that food systems work in Indian Country is focused on making these connections between the old and the new. The projects highlighted in this scan are innovating in four primary ways – several of which track with the four characteristics of innovation highlighted by respondents.

## TRADITIONAL FOODS/FOOD AS MEDICINE

Many of the projects incorporate the use of traditional foods, often embracing these foods as medicine to treat physical ailments associated with obesity. This theme in innovation tracks closely with the survey results, where nearly 70 percent of respondents indicated that a focus or foundation on traditional foods and culture made a program particularly innovative, and more than 70 percent of respondents indicated that providing access to healthier foods was key to food systems innovation in Native communities.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Many projects on youth development as a way to maintain and preserve a tribe's food and culture for future generations. These projects often contain an element of partnership between youth and tribal elders, connecting young and old in a circle of knowledge. This theme and its focus on revitalizing culture through tribal youth also tracks with the survey results.

## MARKET ACCESS

The projects that focus primarily on accessing or redefining markets use a variety of innovative production techniques, many of which are linked to traditional methods. Often, market access programs impact multiple points along the supply chain simultaneously. These programs are excellent vehicles for economic development within tribal communities and they frequently increase production of healthier foods through sustainable methods. In this way, these programs also track with the survey data, not only through increased community access to healthy, nutritious food, but also by strengthening community economies and focusing on environmental sustainability. This type of innovation was important to 60 percent of respondents.

## COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO HEALTH AND HUNGER

While many projects address health disparities in their communities through traditional foods, there are successful, innovative programs that focus on health and hunger in different, but no less impactful, ways. These programs often combine programmatic elements – a key to innovation, according to more than 50 percent of respondents – to provide community-driven, holistic responses to both health disparities and food insecurity.

In practice, all four themes in innovation – Traditional Food/Food as Medicine, Youth Development, Market Access, and Community Responses to Health & Hunger – involve some kind of a return to roots. **The data indicate that linking the past to the present to solve for the future is what it means to be truly innovative right now in tribal food systems work.**

INNOVATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS work in tribal communities focuses on a return to past traditional practices to remedy the

## 2015 PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

The projects and programs in this scan have been categorized based on their predominant type of innovation, but otherwise appear in no particular order. Non-tribal programs that provide strong support for Native foodways appear throughout the scan. We include their information to recognize their contributions and to encourage current and future nominees to look to them as a resource.



## IROQUOIS WHITE CORN PROJECT

Haudenousaunee, Iroquois; Victor, New York

The Iroquois White Corn Project<sup>3</sup> at Gandondagan strives to improve community health outcomes through the production and sale of one particular traditional crop: Iroquois white corn. A traditional food of the Haudenousaunee once grown in abundance in Iroquois communities, is a healthy, nutritive corn with a low-glycemic index and a unique taste and texture. The community members who run the Iroquois White Corn Project see the return of the corn as a return to a healthy community and a vibrant culture. The corn is grown traditionally and is hand-planted, picked, husked and braided. After processing, it is sold at the Seneca Art and Culture Center, online and at select retail outlets and wholesale distributors. The White Corn Project encompasses more than food systems work, but community, culture and entrepreneurship.

**Food is Our Medicine** strives to improve Seneca Nation health outcomes by increasing access to culturally significant food and food usage. The project acknowledges the medicinal power of traditional Seneca foods and the sustainable methods that once grew them, and seeks to bring that knowledge and the healing that comes with it to the present-day Seneca community. It is a joint effort between the Seneca Nation and the Seneca Diabetes Foundation that began in 2013, and during its two years of operation has seen a reduction in the prevalence of diabetes and an increase in health and well-being of the Seneca people.<sup>5</sup>

This holistic program offers the Seneca Nation community a multitude of opportunities to engage in food and health-focused activities, from gardening to film festivals. One of the earliest projects, the farmers market, opened in 2013 and offers community members fresh, local produce from neighboring farmers. In opening the market, Food Is Our Medicine sought to increase the number of both customers and vendors, establish an ongoing partnership with the existing Salamanca Farmers Market, increase community awareness of the Seneca market, and offer indigenous foods for sale. Today, the thriving market has a summer and winter season, allowing



community members to access produce, organic, nontraditional meats, dairy products, and traditional herbs and spices for much of the year. In addition to buying fresh, healthy food at the Seneca farmers market, Food Is Our Medicine also helps community members grow their own traditional food. The organization has overseen the building of a community garden and raised beds, where volunteers have planted more than four-hundred Native plants. Forty community members support the work of the garden, which features half an acre of traditional white corn. The garden promotes community well-being while providing hands-on experience for the community members as they work in the garden with native plants. Food Is Our Medicine serves the Seneca Nation community in other ways as well, including the presentation of a weekly film series on food security and nutrition, sponsorship of two annual

Honoring Mother Earth 5K Walk/Run events, and the promotion of an Indigenous Food Challenge that calls on community members to incorporate more indigenous foods into their diets.

Food Is Our Medicine not only provides opportunities to access and learn to grow traditional foods; the project also hosts community outreach gatherings around traditional food. The Elder's Sharing Circle exemplifies this. The circle meets monthly and invites all ages to come and listen to the elders share traditional wisdom, songs, stories, and recipes.

In this way, Food Is Our Medicine helps sustain Seneca culture by giving elders a space to pass on knowledge to the next generation and preserve traditional ways. This family friendly event happens once a month and begins with a potluck dinner followed by the Sharing Circle.

#### THE MISSION OF FOOD IS OUR MEDICINE IS

“To provide a venue where regional farmers, food producers, crafters and artisans come together to provide a variety of high-quality, locally grown, healthy food options, organic produce, grass fed animal products and handcrafted goods directly to Seneca Nation members and surrounding communities.”

## WHITE EARTH AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

White Earth Nation; White Earth, Minnesota

Since its founding in 1989, the mission of the White Earth Land Recovery Project<sup>6</sup> has been to facilitate the recovery of the original land base of the White Earth Indian Reservation while preserving and restoring traditional practices of sound land stewardship, language fluency, community development, and strengthening spiritual and cultural heritage. White Earth remains committed to biodiversity in agriculture and is working to restore varieties of corn, beans and squash of heirloom varieties.

### AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES; Detroit, Michigan

Serving the intertribal American Indian community of southeast Michigan, American Indian Health and Family Services<sup>8</sup> has developed several initiatives that promote local food systems and overall community health. The center acts as a distribution point for Fresh Food Share Detroit, a community supported agriculture (CSA) – style program that increases community access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables. The center also offers cooking classes, a Three Sisters garden, tobacco garden and medicinal perennials.

## CHEROKEE HEIRLOOM CROP SEED PROGRAM

Cherokee Nation; Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Managed by the Cherokee Nation Natural Resources Department,<sup>7</sup> the Cherokee Heirloom Crop Seed Bank provides tribal citizens with access to 25 heirloom varieties of crop seeds. The seeds, which are distributed free of charge to Cherokee citizens, are preserved specimens of crops that were once cultivated by the Cherokee people thousands of years ago. The tribe releases two to five thousand seed packages each year to Cherokee gardeners, promoting a renewed connection to their ancestors' agricultural practices, as well as an active lifestyle and access to healthy food.

## SEEDS OF RENEWAL

Abenaki Tribal Community; Swanton, Vermont

Located in Swanton, Vermont and serving the Abenaki tribal community, the Seeds of Renewal<sup>9</sup> aims to restore and revitalize traditional food and culture, and promote food sovereignty through the recovery of heirloom crop varieties. Although not federally recognized as a tribe in the United States, the community has been actively engaged in food-related issues.

Their work has focused on research and oral history concerning traditional indigenous Abenaki crop varieties, and then returning seeds of those varieties to local tribal producers. To date, they have recovered more than 20 indigenous crops. By cultivating crops that have deep roots in Creek history, Seeds of Renewal has been able to resurrect the community's horticultural ceremonies and agricultural dances. In addition to recovering Abenaki heirloom crops, the program has also provided seeds of the region to others, such as the Passamaquoddy in Maine.<sup>10</sup>

## MUCKLESHOOT FOOD SOVEREIGNTY PROJECT

**Muckleshoot, Wash.**

When Muckleshoot tribal member Valerie Segrest began working closely with community elders and youth on food systems projects, she noticed a trend: Across generations, the Muckleshoot people had a passion for traditional food and the culture that surrounded it, but found that it was often lacking in their daily lives.<sup>11</sup> To facilitate a return to traditional food culture, Segrest partnered with Northwest Indian College (NWIC) to start the Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project. The project, which began with a community food assessment to determine the parameters of the current community

food system and assess how it could serve the community in the future, increases traditional food knowledge and access through workshops, classes, a Medicine Wheel garden on the NWIC campus and a quarterly traditional food feast for the whole community.<sup>12</sup>

### PROGRAMS TO WATCH:

#### COMMUNITY SMALL FARM, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah; Cedar City, Utah

The Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah is in the process of developing a community garden. The garden will provide the tribal community with a fresh source of produce, helping to combat obesity and diabetes and increase access to healthy food options. The tribe's goal is to produce foods that have a traditional aspect, like pumpkins, squash, beans and corn.

#### TRADITIONAL GROWN FOODS – NATURAL Ma-Chis Creek; Elba, Alabama

This program focuses on growing traditional Creek foods to improve the health and culture of the Ma-Chis Creek Tribe, a state-recognized tribe.

## POTAWOT HEALTH VILLAGE

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Arcata, California

Potawot Health Village was founded in 2002 to serve members of multiple tribes in northern California.<sup>13</sup> Initially funded by the CDC through a Food is Good Medicine grant, the village supports better health and fights obesity-related disorders through traditional food, herbs and cultural practices. The health complex features a two-acre community garden, as well as greenhouses, which yield a variety of fresh produce that is distributed throughout the community via produce stands and a produce subscription program. Throughout the year, the village staff use the fresh produce in cooking demonstrations, enabling community members to get hands-on experience with new recipes and foods. The village also maintains an herb garden, where a multitude of traditional and non-traditional medicinal and culinary herbs grow.

## GET FRESH! PROGRAM

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Chickasaw Nation; Ada, Oklahoma

The Get Fresh! Program is a joint project of the Chickasaw Nation, OSU SHINE and USDA SnapEd.<sup>14</sup> The program helps promote healthy eating and improves health outcomes by providing cooking demonstrations, nutrition education, meal planning assistance and more. The Get Fresh! website includes a variety of healthy recipes, along with a meal-planning tool, to make healthy food choices easy for busy families. Through the Get Fresh! Program, the Chickasaw Nation has also filmed several healthy-cooking video shows, which are available on DVD. The Get Fresh! team does live cooking events around the Chickasaw Nation at nutrition centers, schools and health fairs, bringing healthy eating advice directly to community members.

## MVSKOKE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY INITIATIVE

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**Mvskoke (Creek) Nation; Okmulgee, Oklahoma**

The Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative (MFSI) strives to support the Mvskoke people and surrounding communities through sustainable agriculture, economic development, community involvement, and cultural and educational programs.<sup>15</sup>

This grassroots organization, located in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, in the capitol of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, focuses on preserving traditional foods important to the Muscogee culture. MFSI helps community members incorporate more traditional foods into their diet through hands-on classes, educational programs, intergenerational sharing and education around sustainable agriculture practices. MFSI was one of the earliest tribal nonprofits to champion food sovereignty, and the organization's work ultimately led to the first passage of a food and fitness policy by any tribal government.




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## HIGHLIGHT

**Healthy Roots** is a project of Cherokee Choices of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, launched in 2009 with a grant from the Centers for Disease Control. The program serves all 15,000 Eastern Band members, with particular emphasis on the 8,000 members who reside within the tribe's boundaries. The mission of Healthy Roots, which serves community members of all ages, is to reduce the risk of chronic disease and risk factors within the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians community by promoting physical, emotional, mental and cultural wellbeing. To accomplish these goals, the project works to provide traditional food to the local community and to increase awareness of and participation in traditional forms of physical activity.<sup>16</sup>

Through the Cherokee Youth Garden Initiative, Healthy Roots promotes both traditional food and traditional physical activity for the Eastern Band's youngest community members. This eight-week, summer youth program teaches participants about food systems and

educates them about the cultivation of vegetables, herbs and flowers that they then sell, donate, cook and eat. The program aims to provide opportunities for youth to gain knowledge, skills and experience related to sustainable, vegetable farming practices; teach and model healthy eating with an emphasis on local and traditional Cherokee foods; provide youth with opportunities to develop financial responsibility and small business management skills; provide youth with skills and opportunities for leadership and civic engagement; and ultimately “grow” a new generation of local Cherokee farmers and food advocates. The youth initiative also increases access to trails and promotes healthy physical fitness through walking, running, or biking activities.

Healthy Roots also operates a farm stand, designed to increase healthy food access for all Eastern Band Cherokee members residing within tribal boundaries. The topography of tribal lands often results in inadequate farmland, and only 700 of the tribe’s 56,000 acres are utilized to grow food. Because physical isolation from customers and markets remains a barrier for tribal members, with only one grocery store available inside that 56,000 acres, Healthy Roots uses the farm stand to get healthy food options to Eastern Band people. The farm stand, which produces a variety of fruits and vegetables

including tomatoes, squash, green beans, peppers and corn, stands as an alternative to the many fast-food options inside tribal boundaries. Healthy Roots sells this fresh, nutritious produce at local farmers stands in the summer. The farm stands coordinate with with the Cherokee Youth Gardeners program, giving the youth experience in direct sales. All proceeds support the continued work of Healthy Roots as it expands their programming and focus on sustainability in the future.<sup>17 18</sup>

THEMES IN INNOVATION

# #YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



## WINYAN TOKA WIN GARDEN AND LEADING LADY FARMERS MARKET

Cheyenne River Sioux; Eagle Butte, SD

The Winyan Toka Win Garden<sup>19</sup> is part of the Cheyenne River Youth Project, a nonprofit organization that has been serving Cheyenne River Sioux youth for more than 25-years. The two-acre garden, which provides fresh produce for the two centers within the overall project, is an integral piece of the Cheyenne River Youth Project's health and wellness program. This "field to fork" program teaches youth not only about growing the food, but also preparing or selling it. Volunteers work with children as young as four years old in the garden during the growing season, where the youth learn how to plant, maintain, and harvest food. Then, post harvest, the project sponsors special meals where teenage volunteers highlight some of the produce they've grown and harvested by cooking it themselves. The youth are also able to sell the produce at the project's Leading Lady Farmers Market, which is open to the whole community and also offers local artisans a place to showcase and sell their artwork.

## CHI-NATIONS YOUTH COUNCIL

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Chicago, Illinois

Initially founded in 2011 as an intertribal urban American Indian youth organization focusing activism and social justice, the Chi-Nations Youth Council also engages in food systems work as a way to connect their environmental initiatives with their cultures.<sup>20</sup> Their youth members, inspired by indigenous youth activists around the globe, have been adapting their ancestral practices to an urban setting through gardening and harvesting in public spaces. Currently, the youth are working to bring rainbow corn to the city's public spaces, and every spring they celebrate with annual maple tree tappings, which happen all across the city.

## KUNSI'S LEARNING GARDEN

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Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate; Waubay, South Dakota

The 16,800-square foot Kungsi Garden in Waubay, South Dakota, provides math, science and nutrition education for students at the Enemy Swim Day School. Since it began in 2005, the program has expanded from a small 1,500-foot learning tool to now include walking paths, raised-beds for food, pollinator flower beds and a small apple orchard.

Through gardening, students not only learn about plants, but also the mathematics and science involved in helping their garden grow. Students have conducted climatology studies, soil testing, worm composting and germination experiments. Kungsi's Garden also supports a garden-to-table program teaching youth how to grow and prepare fresh, healthy food. The garden encourages the whole family to participate and in 2014, it sponsored a Sustenance Gardening Workshop series, where adults learned to build raised-garden beds for at-home growing. Kungsi's Garden works with tribal partners, local and state governments, as well as local businesses to increase nutrition education, plant medicinal perennials, grow more traditional foods and create a sacred space within the garden for Spirit Plate.<sup>21</sup>



## COCHITI YOUTH EXPERIENCE

COCHITI PUEBLO, NM

### HIGHLIGHT

**Cochiti Youth Experience, Inc. (CYE)** has been serving the youth and community of Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico, since 2009, empowering tribal youth by returning to traditional Cochiti food and agriculture and offering a range of opportunities for growth.<sup>22</sup> The program began in 2009 and has been incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization since 2010. CYE impacts about 1,200 youth between the ages of one and 18 living on the reservation and in surrounding urban areas. Today, Cochiti Youth Experience runs several projects within Cochiti Pueblo.

Project Hii Hii' Kah (Laughing Corn) a traditional agricultural mentoring program, revitalizes traditional, cultural food and agricultural practices by bringing elders and youth together in meaningful mentoring relationships. In the Cochiti tradition, Laughing Corn is a symbol of joy and abundance that brings with it cultural

and personal well being. The mentorship project is more than knowledge sharing, it's an experiential learning opportunity for the youth. Elders work with their mentees to grow food on the reservation, increasing the community's access to fresh fruits and vegetables while preserving and revitalizing traditional methods of growing food. In addition to preserving the pueblo's cultural survival, this project also offers opportunity for increased economic self-sufficiency. In the future, CYE hopes to expand Project Hii Hii' Kah, increasing not only the participant base but also the on reservation acreage dedicated to growing food.

In addition to the mentor program, CYE also operates the Bee Project. In partnership with a local beekeeper, CYE maintains five hives located on the reservation near the farmlands. The honey produced is offered to the elders. CYE wants to increase the number of hives at the current location, and identify one to two additional sites for another cluster of

hives. They hope to have youth assist with both the upkeep and honey collection.

This year, CYE has also started new projects in partnership with the Pueblo de Cochiti Tribal Administration Department, including Pueblo de Cochiti Social Services Native Youth Leader Conference, Pueblo de Cochiti Social Services Youth/ Parent Traditional Food Preparation and Pueblo de Cochiti Education Department Youth/ Adult Traditional Food Preparation. In the future, CYE plans to create an elder garden to bolster the physical and emotional wellbeing of elders who may not be physically able to work in tribal fields. Providing an elder garden close to the Pueblo de Cochiti Senior Center will enable the elders to be physically active and mentally stimulated, and also provide an opportunity to partner younger children with elders. The elder garden will provide a central location to facilitate youth learning and create a forum where elders may share their knowledge with the next generation.

**“CYE’s mission is to create opportunities for youth so that they may have positive experiences that encourage healthy life choices. While that mission is simple and broad in its message, I think moving forward as we develop our programs and our partnerships grow, our mission is more aptly described as being ‘CYE’s mission is to create partnerships and opportunities for pueblo youth and elders to encourage healthy life choices and to make positive changes for themselves and their community.’”**

**—VKENNETH J. ROMERO, Executive Director, Cochiti Youth Experience**

## SCHOOL COMMUNITY GARDEN

Blackfeet; Browning, Montana

The Browning Community Garden, situated inside a community park, has been working with local community members, schools and the Blackfeet Tribe to build a robust, intergenerational community, foster a learning atmosphere for students, and reconnect with tribal elders to preserve traditions.<sup>23</sup> The garden has been in operation for the past four years and provides half of its space to school projects, renting the other half to community members who wish to garden their own plots. Food from the school garden is donated to local food banks or kept by the students themselves.

## HOPI NATWANI FOR YOUTH

Hopi; Kykotsmovi, Arizona

The Hopi Natwani for Youth Project (HYYP) was developed in 2013 by a team of Hopi village members, community cultural advisors, educators, the Hopi Foundation and the Natwani Coalition.<sup>24</sup> The Hopi Natwani for Youth Project is a culturally appropriate, agricultural curriculum based on Hopi food and farming knowledge and practices. The HNYP is structured around the 12 Hopi lunar cycles, and contains four lessons for every cycle. Through education like the kind HNYP provides, the Natwani Coalition is helping to strengthen Hopi agriculture, revitalize local food systems, and engage the community and tribal youth in food and agriculture once more.



## KOHALA CENTER

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Hámákua region, Hawai'i

In 2012, the Kohala Center opened a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program to train, recruit and provide support for 40 families new to farming.<sup>25</sup> The program helps them develop business plans, secure farm leases, and gain access to farm equipment and materials. With a 10-acre demonstration farm, Kohala can provide hands-on training, and through a mentorship program, attendees can gain up to 1,600 on-farm hours with a successful Native Hawai'ian farmer. The USDA and County of Hawai'i provided grant support to the Kohala Center for this program, and the USDA provided funding for a farmer-training program to allow for mentorship for aspiring farmers.

## ZUNI YOUTH ENRICHMENT

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Zuni; Zuni, New Mexico

Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) is a nonprofit formed by community members in 2008. ZYEP's mission is to give Zuni Reservation youth opportunities for education and physical activity, including archery, soccer, Zuni pottery and poetry lessons, homework help, and more. ZYEP has food and agricultural initiatives, as well, with traditional gardens stationed around the community at schools and other public spaces. These gardens offer Zuni youth hands-on education about good nutrition and agricultural traditions, and help lay the foundation for a healthier future for the entire tribe.<sup>26</sup>

SUSTAINABILITY, CULTURE, AND HEALTH  
KONA, HAWAII

# KA MĀLA 'O EHUNUIKAIMALINO

## HIGHLIGHT

**Ka Māla 'o Ehunuikaimalino**, an Hawaiian immersion school, began a volunteer garden project in 2008, which now has the involvement of the entire school and surrounding community.<sup>27</sup> Ka Mā la 'o Ehunuikaimalino, has about 240 students in grades K-12, and all students, staff and community members are welcome to participate in the upkeep of the garden. The garden teaches Native Hawaiian youth not only about gardening and traditional foods, but also about responsibility and the importance of hard work. This leadership experience helps create strong leaders, increases traditional knowledge and strengthens traditional values, and builds a connection between the students and their land.

The 2.5-acre garden is part of the “Kona Field System” in the gardens of the agriculture god, Lono. The garden is fertilized with chicken manure, and no pesticides are sprayed on the garden's produce. Students learn

gardening methods in the garden's two, outdoor classrooms, hydroponic shade house and worm beds. In addition to gardening techniques, the students also learn how to make traditional meals in the outdoor kitchen off the garden. Ka Mā la 'o Ehunuikaimalino views the garden as a place for cultural learning and a way to restore sustainability while also developing student leaders. "We are returning to sustainability, with our approach with the children to relate Hawaiian stories and traditions. The mā la project activities include growing, nurturing and preparing la'au lapa'au, preparing mea'ai from mā la and sharing produce and cultural activities with 'ohana at home," says Clare Loprinizi, kumu and garden coordinator of the project.<sup>28</sup>

Students learn Hawaiian core values and traditions by building a relationship with the community and families of the students. Students gain cultural understanding through a variety of activities, including traditional chants and songs, and learning why they are sung, what they mean, and when to sing them.

Ka Mā la 'o Ehunuikaimalino finds support through grants from The Kona Outdoor Circle, Honor the Earth and Yes to Carrot. The vision of the garden is to embrace the outdoors, learn, teach and lead as a community starting with the

youth at Ka Mā la 'o Ehunuikaimalino. Volunteers from the community help make this garden – and the educational experience it provides – a success. The school has prioritized a healthy relationship with the community and with students' families to expand the reach of this garden's impact.



## LAKOTA RANCH BEGINNING FARMER/RANCHER PROGRAM

Oglala Sioux; Pine Ridge, South Dakota

Since 2011, the Lakota Ranch Beginning Farmer/Rancher program has been serving the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, providing food, agriculture training and agribusiness workshops, as well as hands-on gardening experience to the community. The program wants to increase the reservation's overall access to healthy, affordable produce. To further that goal, Lakota Ranch Beginning Farmer/Rancher offers community members a chance to participate in farmers markets, garden preparation and maintenance classes, and food preservation courses. Because the Pine Ridge community occupies a large land base and many community members cannot access a market that sits in a single spot, the program has started a traveling market, bringing fresh, affordable food to all corners of the reservation.<sup>29</sup>

## STAR FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

**Navajo Nation; Flagstaff/Leupp, Arizona**

The STAR Farm to School program began May 2013 at STAR School, located near Flagstaff, Arizona.<sup>31</sup> Farm to School programs offer fresh and nutritious food while also exposing children to a variety of locally produced healthy foods. The program provides a nutritious food source and strengthens the relationships between the neighboring Navajo farms and the school. The program also offers opportunities to learn about the land, traditional foods and traditional growing practices.

## BIG PINE PAIUTE FOOD SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

**Big Pine Paiute-Shoshone; Big Pine, California**

This sustainable food system development project began in 2013. The program strives to make locally grown and Native food available to tribal members through sustainable gardening and seed banks. To make its gardening environmentally-friendly and sustainable, the tribe utilizes greenhouses; to provide opportunity for economic development and enhance the tribe's overall food system, the program also began a local farmers market and artisan fair.

### MARKET ACCESS AND EDUCATION

Tribal colleges and universities are doing exciting work in Native food systems. These institutions are partnering directly with tribes to accomplish their goals, and several programs from these institutions are included in this scan. In the Market Access category, *Indianpreneurship: A Native American Journey Into Business*, a partnership between the Navajo Nation and Navajo Technical University,<sup>30</sup> is focusing on training tribal members to launch their own businesses, including food and agribusiness. The program is a series of six-week courses designed to encourage entrepreneurship and small-business launches. The skills and training the program provides around marketing and financial planning are useful to anyone wishing to begin a food business.



# CHOCTAW FRESH

MISSISSIPPI BAND OF  
CHOCTAW INDIANS

## HIGHLIGHT

**Choctaw Fresh Produce** began in 2012, when John Hendrix, director of economic development for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, saw an opportunity: The local Choctaw casino, which had an ongoing relationship with the Choctaw Nation to purchase fresh flowers, now wanted to purchase fresh produce from the tribe, as well.<sup>32</sup> With a guaranteed market for fresh, local goods, Hendrix and the tribe realized that this was not only a wonderful opportunity for economic development, but also a chance to increase tribal members' access to healthy food.

Thanks to this joint effort – and a three-year grant from the Administration for Native Americans – Choctaw Fresh Produce was born. This 100 percent tribally owned business operates five farms spread throughout the reservation, creating jobs for tribal members and improving the vibrancy of the local and regional food system in and around the area through sales of fruits, vegetables and herbs. Through

Choctaw Fresh Produce, the community can access a variety of pesticide- and chemical-free produce, including collard greens, slicer tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, kale, Asian greens, sweet corn, radish, bok choy, romaine lettuce, baby spinach, carrots, zucchini, green onions, spinach, kohlrabi, mixed greens, bell peppers, sweet peppers, yellow squash, green beans, cucumbers, artisan tomatoes, green tomatoes, eggplant, watermelon, sweet onion, and more. And the produce is not only available at the casino restaurants: these foods can be found in select, area grocery stores and farmers markets around Choctaw, Mississippi. Hendrix and project partners are also coordinating with national retailer Whole Foods, and hope to see Choctaw Fresh products in Mississippi Whole Foods franchises soon.

With the use of a van and refrigerated trailer, the Choctaw Fresh market has gone mobile. This mobile setup helps Choctaw Fresh goods reach even the most remote places inside the reservation, where it may be more difficult for tribal members to access the retail locations. Mobile efforts not only expand the market, but also increase community food security. None of the goods are wasted, either: at the end of the week, any remaining produce in the mobile market is donated to churches or the elderly.

Choctaw Fresh Produce offers community supported agriculture (CSA) membership options for tribal members and employees living on the reservation. In the next fiscal year, it will offer CSA memberships to non-tribal members living off the reservation. Because CSA's allow community members to invest upfront in a farm seasonal offerings by purchasing "shares" of produce in advance of production and harvest, the community forms a personal connection with its farmer and its food that improves and strengthens the food chain. Every week, consumers can pick up their share of produce directly from the farm, talk with the farmers about their food, and enjoy fresh, local fruits and vegetables.

The business has also been able to partner with local schools on the reservation, providing tribal youth with fresh food and opportunities for experiential learning. Three Choctaw Fresh high tunnels sit adjacent to elementary schools, and by visiting and working on the farm, tribal youth are gaining an early understanding of where their food comes from and how it's grown. They're developing a taste for a variety of produce, and getting healthier through better eating and activity on the farm.

In 2015, Choctaw Fresh also partnered with the tribe's diabetes prevention program and social services program to increase access to healthy, fresh produce, which it supplies to the cafeteria at the Choctaw Health Center.

## GARDEN/MARKET PROJECT

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**Santee and Omaha Tribes; Santee/Macy, Nebraska**

The collaborative Santee and Omaha Community Food Projects are sponsored by the Center for Rural Affairs and Nebraska Indian Community College.<sup>34</sup> These innovative programs have three major components: Gardens – both community and single family – and gardening assistance, community farmers markets and cooking programs. The garden programs have allowed community members to grow their own fresh fruits and vegetables, increasing overall community health. By providing local gardeners with markets to sell their produce, these programs are not only improving health outcomes in the Santee Sioux and Omaha tribal communities, they're also giving the local economy a boost. The cooking components give participants a forum to share culture and preserve tradition, and have even resulted

in the production of a cookbook from the project. In 2015, the projects began Woyute Was`te (Good Food Baskets), which sold hundreds of baskets filled with fresh produce from Santee tribal members' gardens and market gardens from surrounding villages.

## NAMBE PUEBLO BISON AND FARMING PROJECT

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**Pueblo of Nambe; Sante Fe, NM**

The Nambe Pueblo buffalo herd was established in 1994 in partnership with the Inter Tribal Buffalo Council. Fenced pastures are dedicated to the herd, and meat from the animals goes to tribal members after slaughter. Increasing food security, especially among tribal elders, has been a priority, as has rehabilitating pasture land to support a larger herd.

## PADRE MESA DEMONSTRATION RANCH

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**Navajo Nation; Chambers, Arizona**

The Padre Mesa Demonstration Ranch serves as a hands-on training and skills-development facility where public events are held through-out the year.<sup>35</sup>

Workshops provide experience and knowledge on topics such as cattle handling, health and branding. The Padre Mesa Demonstration Ranch educates new land ranchers about livestock stewardship practices, while also teaching quality assurance practices and proper utilization of range lands.

## HIGHLIGHT: INTERTRIBAL COOPERATION AND MARKET ACCESS

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Several of this year's nominees showcase the power of intertribal cooperation to unite producers and create thriving markets for Native food products. Cooperation can be key to successfully innovating, and these three programs exemplify that process.

### **ATNI Salmon Marketing Program, West Coast**

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI)<sup>36</sup> began the Salmon Marketing Program<sup>37</sup> in 2010 to promote the sale of value-added products from Tribal fishermen and harvesters in Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Throughout the life of the program, ATNI has reached more than 125 producers and estimates that the program has generated more than one million dollars through the creation of new sales and the promotion of higher existing revenue streams. The program helps producers by providing a range of technical assistance and other support, including but not limited to promotion of brands and processors, food quality and safety trainings, fishing supplies and more.

### **Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Portland, Oregon**

Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) works with fisheries from the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes, providing tribal fisherfolk with technical services and protecting treaty rights.<sup>38</sup> CRITFC's work is highly collaborative, working with state and local actors to ensure the future sustainability of fisheries. The commission's Salmon Marketing Program promotes direct sales and marketing of salmon, and assists fisherfolk in connecting with local markets, even coordinating with local buyers to bring them directly to the river for fish sales.<sup>39</sup> The Salmon Marketing Program also assists with market access to farmers markets and wholesale distribution, and conducts food safety trainings for fisherfolk to increase their success. Greater sales have led to financial security for local community fisherfolk and their families, as well as ensuring that fishing traditions are passed on from one generation to the next.

### **Intertribal Buffalo Council**

Beginning with 19 initial member Tribes in February 1991, the Intertribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) has grown to include 60 member tribes caring for 15,000 buffalo.<sup>40</sup> ITBC strives to restore buffalo to Indian lands in a way that is culturally appropriate and ecologically sound, thereby contributing to economic development and prosperity along with cultural and spiritual vitality. To accomplish these goals, ITBC engages in educational efforts among member tribes, assists members with their marketing strategies, provides technical assistance to members, and more.



## HIGHLIGHT

**On the lands of the Navajo Nation**, 10 Navajo families are working to create a healthy, sustainable local food system that educates and empowers community members while celebrating the rich culture and traditions of the Navajo people. Founded in 2009, community-driven and community-led nonprofit organization Hasbídító looks to increase sustainable opportunities for Navajo people through projects that utilize the talents, skills and knowledge of the Navajo Nation communities.<sup>41</sup> Through its Tri-Community Mobile Farmers Market, Hasbídító takes agricultural knowledge of local producers and turns it into a cultural learning opportunity – with a side of market access and increased food security.

Ten families, with about 40 individuals in total grow produce for the market. The market is working to expand the range of vegetables that the local community can access, and has a goal to include more leafy vegetables and fresh fruit. The proceeds of the produce sold at the market replenish the funds used to purchase the produce from the growers and pay one of the families to operate the market. The market sells produce at three Navajo Chapters – Torreon, Counselor, and Ojo Encino – every week from June to October, reaching approximately 3,700 people. Soon, the market hopes to expand to serve a fourth chapter, Pueblo Pintado, increasing the market's overall service area to 4,100 Navajo citizens. The market is impacting all age groups: many of the growers are elders and parents who are teaching their children, grandchildren and other youth how to grow, prepare and eat fresh produce.<sup>42</sup>

Hasbídító does more than offer fresh produce for sale through the market. In the Torreon, Counselor and Ojo Encino chapters, it has helped develop community gardens, which are run by about five people in each chapter. Hasbídító also provides agricultural training on dry-land farming techniques, economic development, job opportunities, healthy-cooking demonstrations with the market's fresh produce, and workshops on a variety of food and agricultural topics, including insects and crop planting. As the organization continues its work, Hasbídító hopes to expand, hire more local youth, hire more staff members and roll out more projects in the area. To do this, Hasbídító is seeking creative solutions to funding and communication challenges: The vast expanse of the Eastern Navajo Nation has little cell-phone service or reliable internet and makes communication across distances difficult. Still, Hasbídító's dedicated families will continue their important work into the future.



## LUDY'S QALGADEM TAGDAA (LUDY'S FRESH FOODS)

Aleut Community of St. Paul Island; St. Paul Island, Alaska

In 2013, the Ecosystem Conservation Office of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island set up a controlled growing facility that would become Ludy's Qalgadem Tagadaa (Ludy's Fresh Foods). The 1,150-square-foot greenhouse has two

commercial hydroponics systems: one for shallow-rooted plants and another for deep-rooted plants. Using LED lighting, with wind turbines powering them, the small staff and volunteers of Ludy's are able to continue production year-round, supporting the local community and providing consistent access to fresh produce. The greenhouses' first crops of butter lettuce, fresh and dried basil, and Poblano peppers were available at local markets in 2014.

## INCREASING MARKET ACCESS THROUGH NATIVE-OWNED BUSINESSES

Among the 2015 nominees are several Native-owned agribusinesses. Some are owned by tribes, and some by tribal members, but all seek to source ingredients for their products from Native producers. This kind of cooperation among Native food producers can yield great – and, in the case of these companies, delicious – results.

- **Kiva Sun Foods.** Kiva Sun Foods produces antibiotic- and GMO-free bison steak, burgers, chili and hotdogs, all made from bison raised in Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota, where bison have lived for thousands of years. Owned by famous PGA-tour pro golfer Notah Begay III (Navajo/San Felipe/Isleta), the company seeks to source from Native ranchers, when possible. Kiva Sun was recently selected by the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations as the primary vendor for bison for the commodity feeding package offered to more than 270 tribes throughout the United States.
- **Native American Natural Foods.** Founded and run by Karlene Hunter (Lakota) and Mark Tilsen, Native American Natural Foods, LLC. (NANF) produces the wildly popular Tanka Bar, a buffalo-based food that promotes Native American beliefs on wellness. One of NANF's goals is to increase the number of Native-produced bison for the bar. When companies like NANF, which sells to Costco, Walmart, REI and Whole Foods, actively seek out Native producers, it creates a major market-access opportunity in the immediate and neighboring communities where these companies are based.<sup>44</sup>
- **Lakota Foods.** Lakota Foods produces, processes and packages popcorn. Owned and operated by the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, it is the first and only Native American-owned popcorn company. Lakota Foods popcorn can be found in local, regional and national retail locations.<sup>45</sup>

- Hoka! Coffee Company. Hoka! Coffee Company is making an impact in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, by purchasing its coffee beans from small farms in South and Central America and providing economic growth in the local economy. With its motto, “Indigenous from farm to cup,” Hoka! exemplifies the extraordinary potential for economic success when Native business owners embrace both their own diversity and that of the producers from whom they source – even if those producers are international.<sup>46</sup>
- Bedré Fine Chocolate. Bedré Fine Chocolate, a Chickasaw Nation chocolate company, produces and sells fine chocolate bars, meltaways, twists, crisps and coffee at their locations in Ada and Davis, Oklahoma. Bedré Fine Chocolates can be purchased online and in national and regional retail locations.<sup>47</sup>

These – and many more – Native-owned, Native-controlled agribusinesses drive change and increase market access for all Native producers when they prioritize sourcing their food products from Native farmers and ranchers.




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## HIGHLIGHT

**Meskwaki Food Sovereignty Initiative**<sup>48</sup> (MFSI) began in 2012 and focuses on educational outreach around food system control and development of sustainable local farms and farmers. MFSI emphasizes the impact of local foods and Native foods and medicines, in helping prevent many modern diseases, including diabetes, while also strengthening the economy, building cultural identity and healing relationships with the land. Acting as an umbrella organization, MFSI supports a variety of initiatives serving the Meskwaki Nation settlement, home of the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa.

One of these initiatives, Red Earth Gardens, has seen remarkable growth since its beginning in 2013. The Gardens consist of 32-acres in total, with 28 devoted to

hay production. On the remaining four acres, the farm produces 44 organic fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers in 163 varieties. Though supported by MFSI, Red Earth Gardens is a commercial venture and strives to become self-sustaining and regionally profitable. To this end, the hard-working folks at Red Earth Gardens have created market access through tribally supported agriculture (TSA) and community supported agriculture (CSA) applications, gaining support from the surrounding community and improving local access to fresh, healthy food in the process. In addition to local direct sales, the garden's produce is also available at 20 area markets, including the Trading Post, Toledo Farmers Market and Grinnell Area Food Co-op, as well as several area grocery stores and restaurants. Through MFSI's support and its own dedicated outreach, Red Earth Gardens is very popular in the local community. MFSI hosts visitors, tours and talks at the gardens. In 2013-2014, staff held 25 events at the gardens, hosting a total of 563 participants. And the gardens have reaped the rewards of this community support: Recent reports show that Red Earth Gardens has increased its revenue by 20 percent through concentrated community outreach.

Red Earth isn't the only garden growing strong under the MFSI umbrella. MFSI programming also includes two other

gardens serving Meskwaki seniors and youth. The Senior Garden yields a variety of produce but focuses on traditional corn, beans and squash. This garden provides for elders through meals at the senior center, and through donations to the local food pantry. In 2014, the garden produced about 1,791 pounds of fruits and vegetables with the help of 25 volunteers working about 284 hours. While the Senior Garden is focused on helping elders, the Meskwaki Settlement School garden program is for the children. This program teaches students about the growing process of the food they eat, using the garden's six raised beds, ground plots, greenhouse, hoop house and compost bin as real-world teaching tools. All the food that the students grow and harvest goes back to the school cafeteria to nourish the children throughout the year, teaching them that a little hard work in the garden eventually means delicious, healthy food on the plate. When school is not in session, the garden's bounty never goes to waste: It is donated to the senior center to supplement the Senior Garden's harvest. During the year, the settlement school garden produces about 50 pounds of eight kinds of produce, such as radishes, lettuce, kale and tomatoes.

In addition to Red Earth Gardens and the Senior Garden, MFSI offers several other educational and cultural events to the Meskwaki Nation community.

These events frequently focus on youth engagement with traditional culture. One of its most popular events has been the Maple Syrup Camp, held in the spring of 2014, which taught students how to identify maples, make spouts, tap the trees and boil down the sap to make delicious syrup. The students learned how to make traditional taps from sumac trees and used them to tap the trees.



# »»»»» Themes in Innovation

*Community Response to Health & Hunger*

## SLIM BUTTES AGRICULTURAL PROJECT

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Oglala Sioux; Pine Ridge, South Dakota

For 30 years, the Slim Buttes Agricultural Project on the Pine Ridge Reservation has been helping families and farmers increase access to healthy food and the tools to grow it. In 2004, the program enabled 535 families to begin home gardens, thanks to a generous grant from the Oneida Nation, New York. The produce from each garden supports not only each individual family, but frequently is shared among families and neighbors in the community. In addition to family-garden assistance, Slim Buttes also supports farmers and ranchers through soil conservation work and access to tractors.

## TOHONO O'ODHAM COMMUNITY ACTION (TOCA)

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Tohono O'odham Nation; Sells, Arizona

Tohono O'odham Community Action's (TOCA) programming falls into two categories: food systems and wellness and cultural revitalization. TOCA's work in food systems has many contours and is deeply rooted in the traditional food system of the Tohono O'odham people. They have worked many years.

To establish and re-establish the traditional food system in the region and have a comprehensive approach to school food access. TOCA promotes traditional Oidag gardening and offers mentoring programs for those who wish to learn. In addition to growing food, TOCA also promotes cultural fitness. The organization has achieved national recognition through its publication of the Native Foodways Magazine, which profiles new developments in Native food systems each month. Overall, TOCA has created a vibrant educational system tied to the history of the Tohono O'odham people, their traditional foods and traditional foods calendars.<sup>49</sup>

## THE PEOPLES' GARDEN

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Penobscot/Wabanaki; Indian Island, Maine

The Peoples' Garden is a community garden on Indian Island, Maine. This collaborative project started in 2011 with one hoop house, and is currently expanding its gardens with the aid of volunteers from the tribe and tribal government.

## HEALTHY COOKING AND EATING IN INDIAN COUNTRY SCHOOLS

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Navajo Nation; Crownpoint, New Mexico

Beginning in March 2014, Navajo Technical University's (NTU) Culinary Arts program in Crownpoint, New Mexico started promoting healthy cooking and eating habits by traveling to Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools around the state. The project uses the NTU catering truck and mobile kitchen which they take to the BIE schools.

The program trains culinary staff at the schools on how to cook nutritious Native foods that entice students to eat healthy. Their goal is to foster healthy eating habits among American Indians. Recently, NTU received a grant from the Walmart Foundation to help support the project.

## GARDEN BOX GARDEN

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**Little River Band of Ottawa Indians;  
Manistee, Michigan**

The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians started a gardening project in 2007 in Manistee, Michigan, motivated by their desire to provide fresh vegetables for the elders and children of the community. With support from the tribal council, the Garden Box Garden project has funded 32 completed raised beds. Members of the project are individually responsible for the beds they maintain and sign contracts indicating their willingness to care for the space. At the end of the growing season, the program sponsors a Harvest Day cooking contest, bringing the community together to share the garden harvest with children, elders and tribal families.

## SEVEN ARROWS GARDEN

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**Pueblo of Laguna; Laguna, New Mexico**

The Seven Arrows Garden is located in the Pueblo of Laguna, New Mexico, and was started by Kori Marmon. After the loss of her father due to health-related issues, Marmon began to look at health and food more closely. Marmon realized that a community garden would be a great benefit to the community. With support and resources from the Laguna Department of Education and Hunger

Grow Away, Marmon was able to build the first, raised garden bed. Only non-GMO seeds are planted in this garden and most come from other Pueblos and local seed banks that are planted using traditional knowledge and techniques. Seven Arrows Gardens hopes to build a sustainable agricultural economy that would benefit the entire community.

## HEALTHY HEART

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**Citizen Potawatomi Nation;  
Shawnee, Oklahoma**

For the past five years, the Healthy Heart Program at Citizen Potawatomi Nation has helping community members reduce the risks of heart disease, Type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The program, which serves around 177 participants annually, is incredibly individualized – program staff meet one-on-one with every participant to establish and monitor healthy lifestyle goals, including changes in activity level and diet. Healthy Heart offers participants opportunities to eat better through nutrition vouchers, cooking demonstrations and classes taught by program dieticians, healthy grocery shopping demonstrations at a local discount grocer and a community garden.

## HOPI FOOD COOPERATIVE

Hopi; Kykotsmovi/Polacca/Second Mesa, Arizona

In 2013, the Hopi Food Cooperative opened its doors to the local Hopi community.<sup>51</sup> This volunteer program is community-led, with a shared leadership model that promotes flexibility in programming and information sharing among all members. The cooperative supports local Hopi producers and community members in a variety of ways, including cooking classes for the Hopi junior and senior high schools, canning and preservation education, community food sharing and recipe swapping, and more.

The cooperative also partners with other local organizations, like the Natwani Coalition, Hopi Tutswka Permaculture and the Hopi Special Diabetes Program to hold community events, including a Hopi Farmers Market and Exchange, where community members can gather to trade, barter and sell fresh foods.

### NEW TECHNOLOGIES SUPPORTING OLD PASTURES

The Baboquivari District of the Tohono O'odham Nation has partnered with American Indian Education Consultants and Droneworx to use unmanned aerial surveillance technology as a water mapping tool. If successful, the project hopes to quickly and cost-effectively identify appropriate locations for water storage tanks and cattle feeding areas so that farmers and ranchers can make more informed decisions faster. By identifying historical drainage patterns, the project also hopes to facilitate a return of historical meadowlands for cattle.

# NATURE'S GARDEN

INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS WORK BY GEDAKINA, INC.  
SERVING MULTIPLE TRIBES IN NEW ENGLAND



## HIGHLIGHT

**Nature's Garden**, an initiative of Gedakina, Inc., began in 2013 and focuses on increasing the food security of indigenous people in the New England region of the United States. Gedakina, pronounced "g' dah keen nah," means "Our world, a way of life" in the Wabanaki language. Gedakina was founded in 2002 as a multigenerational endeavor to strengthen and revitalize the cultural knowledge and identity of Native American youth and families across New England, and to conserve traditional homelands and places of historical, ecological and spiritual significance. Through the Nature's Garden initiative, Gedakina seeks to reduce community dependency on governmental food-assistance programs by increasing access to food with a higher nutritional value. By increasing food security, Nature's Garden hopes to prevent illness and encourage indigenous food sovereignty.<sup>52</sup>

Nature's Garden provides healthy and nutrient-dense foods in an area that depends on government commodities, food programs and food pantries. The garden educates young people year-round on traditional and sustainable food systems, community gardening, leadership, self-sufficiency and confidence while providing nutritious food for the community. Through Nature's Garden, northeast indigenous people are working within the boundaries of their lands to revitalize traditional agricultural practices like mound gardens, raised-bed and flat-ground, cooperative community gardens. Currently, Nature's Garden grows corn, beans, squash, fruit, lettuce, greens, peppers, tomatoes, berry bushes, cucumbers, grapes, sunchokes and various other plants.

The program also teaches youth where to find foods and medicine in nature. Nature's Garden expands its program outside the traditional gardens, working to revitalize the practice of fresh and saltwater finfishing among indigenous youth. Program volunteers teach fishing practices with traditional fish weirs and traps, along with modern fishing reels and rods. In the coming year, the program will provide fishing sets to at least 250 youth, in grades K-12, that include a fishing rod, reel and a tackle box.

In the future, Nature's Garden will continue to develop community garden projects across the New England area, working to increase the number of indigenous gardens that benefit youth and the elderly.<sup>53</sup>

# TRIBAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH NON-TRIBAL PROGRAMS: A COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS

This year's nominees include several tribal programs addressing community health and hunger that have chosen to partner with other, local entities, such as universities or local county health offices, to accomplish their work.

## **Klamath Basin/UC Berkeley Cooperative Project**

*Yurok, Karuk and Klamath Tribes; Klamath Basin, California*

This cooperative project among tribal, university and community partners seeks to promote healthy communities, ecosystems and economies among the Karuk, Yurok and Klamath tribes in the Klamath Basin area of California. The project has a policy evaluation component that examines potential barriers and challenges to resilient food systems in the Klamath Basin.

Currently, the project is conducting a Tribal Food Security and Health Assessment as part of this evaluative process. The project also engages in specific programming to increase food access, improve health outcomes and improve economies, such as healthy-cooking classes and community gardens.

## **Hoopa Valley Food Policy Council**

*Hoopa; Hoopa Valley, California*

The Hoopa Valley Food Policy Council works in conjunction with the Hoopa Valley Tribe and Humboldt County officials to promote healthy food access. One of the program's key collaborative projects is the sponsorship of a YouTube web series showing viewers how to cook with locally sourced, Native ingredients. Meagan Baldy, who directs the related Hoopa Community Garden, began the web series in 2013.

## **Healthy Foods/Healthy Communities**

*Rosebud Sioux; Mission, South Dakota*

To address the problem of limited access to affordable, nutritious food on the reservation, South Dakota State University has partnered with the Rosebud Sioux, Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Sioux communities to increase on-reservation food-production, both of traditional and non-traditional foods. Using an integrated food production model that incorporates traditional scientific knowledge and newer technologies, Healthy Foods/Healthy Communities has worked with the tribes to increase home gardening on five reservations, provide youth training and promote intergenerational sustainability, and offer a number of workshops for new and experienced producers on value-added production, business and entrepreneurship, marketing and food safety.

## NATIVE AMERICAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE

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### Intertribal; Taos, New Mexico

Formed in 2012, Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance (NAFSA) is a joint initiative of First Nations Development Institute and the Taos County Economic Development Corporation.<sup>54</sup> An intertribal organization, NAFSA aspires to create a national movement of Native American advocates and leaders around issues of food sovereignty, food security and nutrition in Indian Country. The organization strives to foster growth and change in Indian Country food systems through networking opportunities for Native producers, development of educational materials, culinary-history education and training, and more.

## TRIBAL FOOD SUMMIT

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### Intertribal; Portland, Oregon

The first Tribal Food Summit was held in January 2014 in Portland, Oregon. The summit brought Native local-food gatherers, stewards, producers, manufacturers and growers together with a goal of connecting emerging youth leaders with tribal elders. The summit delved into the rich history of Native foods, as well as legal problems and solutions to food systems work in Indian Country.

## COMMUNITY GARDEN

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### Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde; Oregon

The Grande Ronde Community Garden, *tilixam taska tenes-tush-illi* or “The People’s Garden,” began growing food in April 2014 and has been providing community food pantries, elders and preschoolers with fresh produce. The Garden produces over 2,000 pounds of produce annually, along with 3,000 eggs from new laying hens. The Garden’s goal is to feed the community and teach youth about healthy food.

## SKAGIT RIVER SYSTEM COOPERATIVE

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### Sauk-Suiattle/Swinomish; LaConner, Wash.

The Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC) is a joint project of the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe and Swinomish Indian Tribal Community.<sup>55</sup> It was launched to provide natural-resource-management services, and actively works to restore both aquatic and terrestrial habitats to increase the dwindling salmon population, as well as increase populations of other indigenous wildlife. Tribal members sit on the board of directors and ensure that the SRSC is aligned with tribal goals for community food systems.

## KASAAN SCHOOL GREENHOUSE GARDEN PROJECT

### Organized Village of Kasaan; Kasaan, Alaska

A collaborative project among the tribe, city, school, community and AmeriCorps, the Kasaan School Greenhouse Garden Project aims to increase food security and local food production through a school greenhouse. Construction began in 2014. The garden will provide traditional and non-traditional produce to the school community and also serve as an economic development tool: Any produce not incorporated into the school lunch program will be sold to local island markets. Currently, the project partners are looking to expand this operation in the near future with the addition of hydroponics equipment, which would enable year-round growing.

## TOLANI LAKE ENTERPRISES

### Winslow, Arizona

Tó Łá ní Enterprises (TLE) is a Native American run Community Development Corporation (CDC).<sup>56</sup> It was organized to foster and encourage Native American economic security, food security, community well-being, higher education, Native Veteran's issues and the preservation of Native culture. TLE is

deeply involved in community outreach; and incubation of Native business. In 2012, TLE received a Conservation Innovation grant from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services to conduct a three-year, national pilot project to demonstrate the environmental, agricultural, economic and sociocultural effectiveness and benefits of solar energy systems for pumping irrigation-quantities of water; and to encourage and facilitate the adoption of such systems among Navajo, Hopi and other tribal conservation districts, farmers and ranchers in the arid and semi-arid Southwest.

## HEALTHY TRADITIONS

### Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians; Siletz, Oregon

The Healthy Traditions program of the Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians began in 2011 with a Centers for Disease Control grant targeting projects that prevent diabetes. Healthy Traditions provides services to tribal members in an 11 county service area within western Oregon, offering community garden projects, hunting education, cooking, drying, freezing and canning classes, gathering trips and sustainable-practices education.

The program aims to increase access to traditional foods in order to increase food security and improve health outcomes.

## COLLABORATION WITH FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES EXTENSION PROGRAM LEADS TO GREAT RESULTS

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Since 1990, the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP), funded through the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, has been supporting food and agriculture programs among federally recognized tribes throughout the country. With more than thirty locations, FRTEP offices help support tribes with education and outreach around food and agricultural production. FRTEP was created by Congress as a way to reach those tribes whose communities are not served by conveniently located tribal colleges and universities, and provides resources to 1,862 land grant institutions to create programs specifically designed to assist tribes in food- and agriculture-related activities. FRTEP offices can support opportunities for youth, help farmers and ranchers increase profits, and assist with specific needs identified by the tribal community as a whole, like health- or nutrition-focused programming. FRTEP program officers are often members of the tribes they serve, helping to promote dialogue between the program and the tribe. Two of the nominees in this area have found great support from their FRTEP offices.

### **Food Sovereignty – Gardening and Gathering**

*Kalispel Tribe; Cusick, Washington*

By working with the FRTEP office, which opened its doors in 2011, the Kalispel Reservation is increasing food sovereignty and community food security through two programs: gardening classes and traditional food gathering site restoration. The Kalispel Tribal Extension gardening program offers classes to community members who wish to grow their own food. A 2015 partnership with WSU Food Sense Nutrition Education has allowed tribal members to learn gardening and harvesting skills in garden-to-table classes. To restore gathering sites for traditional foods, FRTEP and Kalispel have been working to collect traditional seeds, reintroduce fire and promote traditional resource management practices. For tribal youth, the program also offers hands-on training at tribal youth gardening sites.

### **Hoopa, Yurok and Karuk Tribes**

The University of California Cooperative Extension-Humboldt County program has had a FRTEP office since 2011. The FRTEP office helps tribes in the region with food production education, food security awareness, and development of action plans for increased food security. The office also helps engage tribal youth in food and agriculture and exposes them to potential careers in natural resources.

## ELDERS TRADITIONAL FOODS HUNTER SUPPORT PROGRAM

### Native Village of Kotzebue; Kotzebue, Alaska

Operated by the Native Village of Kotzebue, the Elders Traditional Food Support Hunter Program provides Kotzebue hunters with funding to purchase drums of gas, which support their hunting operations. In return, the hunters provide Kotzebue elders with traditional Niqipiaq (foods), including large bearded seal in the spring and caribou in the fall.<sup>57</sup> The program creates a collaborative partnership between the tribe and its elders and hunters. Currently, the program's goals are to expand its traditional food service to elders living in long-term care centers, in addition to those it already serves in-home.

## SUSTAINABLE MOLOKA'I

### Hawai'i

Sustainable Moloka'i is a grassroots group that inspires youth and residents to work together to ensure a sustainable future. Sustainable Moloka'i is involved in several programs, including the Hawaii Farm to School Garden Hui, which supports more than 60 school gardens. This program helps build and extend school garden programs, which then bring

local produce into local schools in Hawaii. Sustainable Moloka'i founded and supports the Moloka'i Food Hub, helping Moloka'i farmers find market access for their fresh produce and increasing sales to local community members. Sustainable Moloka'i is conducting an energy assessment and agriculture needs assessment, which will shed light on the Molokai' community's needs. The program's innovative "Moloka'i-pedia," an online database assessing Moloka'i's resources using a 12-point wheel of sustainability, is a wonderful way to provide information about traditional topics such as culture, ecoeducation and waste management.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD GUIDE

### Anchorage, Alaska

Created in 1997, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium is a nonprofit organization that offers a range of health services to Alaska Natives statewide. The organization publishes a variety of health and wellness resources, including the Traditional Food Guide and Traditional Food Guide Activity Book. The food guide is designed with cancer survivors in mind, but also serves as an effective model for nutrition education and information for a wider audience about the nutritive content and benefits of traditional Alaska Native foods. The activity guide uses interactive

methods like games and problem solving to make nutrition education and exercise fun and accessible for Alaska Native children. It also contains recipes and plenty of information about traditional foods.<sup>59</sup>

## TRIBAL BISON FARM

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### **Native Village of Stevens; Delta, Alaska**

The Stevens Village IRA Council began its Tribal Bison Farm in 2004 with 15 plains bison roaming 700 acres of land.<sup>60</sup>

Randy Mayo, first chief of Stevens Tribal Village and principal operator of the farm, began this project to provide the local community with a stable meat supply from low-maintenance animals. Today, the farm runs 100 buffalo on 2,000 acres. The bison serve as a staple meat for the local community, and the cover land that provides hay and grazing areas for the herd has also helped various types of birds and moose to flourish again in the area. The herd is also a teaching tool for local youth, who come to the farm in school groups to learn about the herd.

# TRIBAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND SUPPORT FOR NATIVE FOODWAYS

Tribal governments can support community health as well as tribal agriculture in a variety of ways. As sovereign nations, tribal governments can take an active role in increasing food security and promoting good health through their own laws, policies and initiatives. For example, in an effort to promote healthy choices and increase monetary support for local farmers, the Navajo Nation passed a junk food tax in April 2015.<sup>61</sup> The tax levies a two percent tax on all junk food and soda products sold on reservation. The Navajo Nation is the first tribe in the country to enact such a tax on junk food products – products that reportedly account for up to 80 percent of the food stock on Navajo Nation grocery store shelves. The nation hopes that the revenue generated from this tax will exceed two billion dollars annually, money that can then go to support many of the small farms spread throughout the nation. Tribes can also enact policies or laws supporting tribal agriculture and food systems through their agriculture departments, or similar branch of government. While not every tribe has a department or branch of government specifically dedicated to agriculture or food, food systems work is so multifaceted that there are still impactful ways to promote and further agriculture through many other areas of tribal government, law and policy. The 2015 nominees included two governmental entities that are doing just that.

## Ho-Chunk Heritage Restoration Project

*Black River Falls, Wisconsin (Ho-Chunk Nation).*

The Heritage Restoration Department of the Ho-Chunk Nation's government is devoted to protecting both natural and traditional resources for the Ho-Chunk people. By partnering with the state government to support the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, the department has been able to protect indigenous plantlife and animals important to the Ho-Chunk Nation.

## Wisconsin Tribal Advisory Council

The Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC) was established in 2001 and provides a forum for 11 Native American tribes in Wisconsin to identify and solve natural-resource issues on tribal lands. This intergovernmental Council gives a voice to all 11 Tribes on important conservation issues. The council reviews and recommends proposals for conservation projects from member tribes. These conservation projects vary in nature, but many – like the recent wild rice restoration or increased access to traditional fishing sites – have a direct impact on tribal agriculture and food systems among the member tribes. The Forest County Potawatomi Bug Lake Project was a recent success for the WTCAC: This project helped build a boat landing that will provide more fishing opportunities for the community, while also reducing erosion of sediment into the lake.

## NATIVE DIABETES WELLNESS PROGRAM

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Tribal/University partners, Nationwide**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has been engaged for many years in a Native Diabetes Wellness Program focusing on nutrition, obesity, physical activity, heart disease, stroke and other health disparities in Indian Country.

Through their partners in this ongoing work (17 Native communities and the University of Oklahoma American Indian Institute) the program focused deeply on the interconnections between health improvement and traditional foods.

The CDC provided ongoing support to building connections that support traditionally-oriented, sustainable, valuable ecological approaches to diabetes prevention, focusing on community efforts to reclaim traditional foods and physical activity in their communities.

The partners in the project included: Nooksack Indian Tribe, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Salish Kootenai College, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, United Indian Health Services, Indian Health Care Resource Center of Tulsa, Ramah Navajo School Board, Cherokee Nation, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Santee Sioux Nation, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Catawba

Cultural Preservation Project, Tohono O'odham Community Action, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association and the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Care Consortium. The program has released three compendiums of outcomes and is releasing a fourth compendium soon.

ONEIDA NATION  
ONEIDA, WI



## HIGHLIGHT

Since 1994, **Oneida Community Integrated Food Systems (OCIFS)** has recognized the complexity of food systems, as well as the importance of a healthy food system for the On<sup>^</sup>yote a ka – the Oneida People of the Standing Stone.<sup>62</sup> Through a dynamic, integrated system of programs, OCIFS and a related project Tsyunhehkwa, helps to ensure a healthier, more fulfilling life for families on the Oneida reservation. For 20 years, OCIFS has promoted economic development and job creation through production of high-quality, organic foods. This umbrella organization encompasses multiple food-production operations, including a garden, cannery, orchard, farm, seed distribution site, and more. OCIFS is open to the public and serves tribal members on the reservation in nearby urban areas like Green Bay, DePere, Ashwaubenon, Pulaski and Seymour.

To OCIFS staff, better food means better nutrition and a better life for all tribal members. OCIFS works hard to ensure that members have access to healthy, locally grown food. OCIFS' primary crop, traditional white corn, goes into more than 10 products, including flours, soups, breads, and fresh hull and dehydrated corn. A small production garden grows produce bought by local restaurants and distributed to the Oneida Tribal School through the farm to school program and to tribal elders through the Oneida Elderly Meal site. This thriving garden also sells produce to the OCIFS cannery, which turns the fresh goods into an assortment of value-added products such as pickles and salsas. The cannery also works with the Oneida Tribal Orchard, purchasing apples to make apple sauce, apple butter, apple chips, and more. The agriculture program site has been certified organic since 2001, and OCIFS works to incorporate sustainable farming practices into the overall production model. The small herd of cattle the program runs yields grass-fed beef for sale to the local community, and all revenue generated returns to the Oneida Tribal General Fund, which supports the projects' annual budgets.

Through the Tsyunhehkwa program, OCIFS, provides educational opportunities and agricultural services to community members. To promote the establishment of community food gardens throughout the reservation, Tsyunhehkwa offers tilling and rotovating services for food production gardens and operates a seed and plant distribution project that, for a small fee, will provide seeds and bedding plants to help establish a food garden. Once the gardens are successful, community members can learn to preserve or process their freshly grown food by attending local workshops or demonstrations at the OCIFS cannery. According to Jeff Metoxen, OCIFS chair, and Bill VerVoort, coordinator, "These services help us to reach out to the community and larger customer base, providing them the ability to share their knowledge and educate what their programs work toward."

**"Don't give up. You may lose the little battles, but think of new and better ways to overcome objectives. A lot of times 'No,' means, 'We need more information.' We haven't stated our case thoroughly or in the right way for people to understand. Celebrate the small successes."**

**—JEFF METOXEN**

*OCIFS Chairperson and Tsyunhehkwa Director*

What's next for this 20-year success story? OCIFS is beginning to work with the United States Department of Agriculture and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to increase traditional food and farm-to-school food in tribal schools. Currently, the traditional white corn is processed with a USDA / FDA certification so it is easier to integrate that product into the feeding programs. After several months of negotiation with the USDA regional office, OCIFS is now allowed to sell its meat to the school. The next phase is to work with the USDA to allow OCIFS to provide more than the maximum 20 percent of the school budget for local foods. The OCIFS meat is not USDA certified but it is state certified. OCIFS meat is considered natural, with no hormones or antibiotics.<sup>63</sup>



## HIGHLIGHT

**The Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC)** has been supporting agricultural success in Indian Country since its creation in 1987.<sup>64</sup> Today, IAC continues its presence as a force for change in intertribal food systems, policy change and market access for tribal food products. The services and support that IAC provides to Native farmers and ranchers from coast to coast are comprehensive, and the producers it serves typically achieve great success. IAC offers a variety of services to Native farmers and ranchers, from export/import and marketing advice for producers who wish to engage commercial markets with their products, to youth programs that train the next generation of food and agriculture leaders in Indian Country. IAC's annual meeting offers attendees the chance to hear from their peers, nonprofit organizations and government officials from tribal, federal and state governments about agricultural work in Indian Country.

### **Technical Assistance Network: On the Ground Assistance for Native Producers, Anywhere, Anytime**

Through its Technical Assistance Network,<sup>65</sup> IAC provides Native producers with a direct link to experienced agricultural professionals who can give advice and assistance in loan or grant application processes, business and marketing planning, logistics, supply chain, risk management and daily farm or ranch operations. Active since 2010, the Technical Assistance Network has 15 professional technical assistance specialists who live and work in 12 regions throughout the contiguous United States and Alaska. They travel regularly throughout their home regions, visiting with and assisting producers. The specialists sit at kitchen tables and talk about financial and farm/ranch business planning; they walk through fields with producers and discuss conservation and farming or ranching techniques. They are happy to assist producers in navigating the complex world of federal agencies, including the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Through the Technical Assistance Network, Native farmers and ranchers can access a wealth of information that can keep their operations running smoothly and profitably, far into the future.

During its five years of operation, the Technical Assistance Network has helped

Native producers successfully appeal denied federal farm loans, navigate loan processes to earn federal loans without administrative appeal, set up tribal conservation districts, organize as Section 17 corporations to increase profitability, create a mobile farmer's market, secure matching funds for agricultural grants, sponsor vaccination clinics for farm animals, and more.

The expertise of the Technical Assistance Network staff and the extraordinary power of the interpersonal connection between the staff and producers drive this program's success. The network's ability to put qualified food and agriculture professionals in homes and on farms for in-person dialogue about farm financial planning and management has made a huge difference for the individuals it serves. For producers in remote areas with limited connectivity, this ability to speak to the staff in person is especially important. The Technical Assistance Network is a great example of how the simplest ideas – such as, human connection – can lead to innovation and success for Indian Country food systems.<sup>66</sup>

### **Promoting Native Agriculture Around the Globe with American Indian Foods**

In 1998, IAC began a partnership with the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service to promote American Indian-made agricultural products on an international scale. As part of this partnership, IAC offers an export program designed to assist Native producers who want to sell their food products internationally. International sales can be a daunting process, but IAC offers technical expertise and education around the entire export process. International sales can boost local economies by driving product sales and over the life of this program, IAC has helped 30 Native food companies do just that by helping them find the right international market for their particular product.

IAC's program helps companies locate the right markets by attending national and international trade shows, assisting with brand development and brand-building, thinking through logistics of distribution, and more. Through this process, Native American Natural Foods, which produces the highly popular Tanka Bar, has increased its annual sales to more than \$200,000. Native products sold internationally thanks to the American Indian Foods export program include wild rice, seafood, bison jerky, chocolate, tea, jams, jellies, and more. If you find these products on a store shelf in Germany, it's a safe bet that IAC helped get them there.<sup>67</sup>

### **Made/Produced by American Indians™: IAC's Answer to Intellectual Property Protection**

Geographic indicators and regional symbols of production can be an excellent way to drive product sales and promote agribusiness growth. Trademarks, in particular, can also provide legal protections – in some case worldwide – against faux products that purport to be authentic, trademarked goods. IAC was dismayed that so many products in the marketplace – up to 20 percent of the one billion spent annually on Indian cultural goods – billed themselves as American Indian made, when in fact they were not. The trademark is an innovative legal tool that can safeguard American Indian goods and the culture that they represent by providing producers with a process to certify authenticity.<sup>68</sup>

To help American Indian food producers and makers of other goods tap into this protection, IAC developed a registered trademark, Made/Produced by American Indians, in 1991. The mark was approved by the United States Patent and Trademark Office in 1995, and during the past two decades more than 500 American Indian businesses have been licensed to use it. The first, Manitok Wild Rice, a tribal enterprise of the White Earth Nation, continues to use the mark today on a variety of products.

### **IAC's Role in Youth Development**

Encouraging and engaging young Native people in food and agriculture has long been a mainstay of IAC programming. The organization supports youth in a variety of ways, from scholarship opportunities to educational experiences and training. IAC offers a scholarship to any Native person attending an institution of higher education and studying an agricultural-related field. Every year for the past 10 years, the organization has sponsored the IAC Youth Essay Contest, which invites American Indian and Alaska Native youth to write down their thoughts on a specific topic. Three finalists are chosen to receive and award at the IAC Annual Meeting, and most of those finalists go on to become students in their chosen agricultural fields.<sup>69</sup>

For the past two years, IAC has joined with the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative and a number of other partner organizations to support the Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit, which brings American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian youth to the University of Arkansas School of Law for a comprehensive educational program that teaches them about the unique legal and financial realities of farming, ranching and doing food systems work in Indian Country.<sup>70</sup> The program would not be possible without the strong support and extended

network of the IAC. The organization also educates youth at the Annual Meeting's youth conclave, providing training and workshops on a variety of topics relevant to young producers who are just starting their careers.

The IAC's work in youth development has only just begun. In December 2014, the board unanimously approved a proposal by young producers, Ryia Farlee and Sha'teal Pearman of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe, to create a youth council, which will have the same regional composition as the board. The youth council will advise the board on youth issues and give visibility to ideas and programming designed by and for Native youth. The board has been actively seeking youth council candidates and hopes to officially seat the 13-member council in December 2015.

## FIRST NATIONS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

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First Nations Development Institute's (FNDI) mission is to strengthen American Indian economies by investing in innovative institutions and models that strengthen asset control and support economic development for American Indian people and their communities.<sup>71</sup> First Nations has worked for more than 30 years on these core mission areas, and several years ago launched its Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative (NAFSI). FNDI's work in food follows from the recognition that accessing healthy food is a challenge for many Native American children and families. NAFSI<sup>72</sup> provides grants on an annual basis to tribal governments and organizations that work directly to build sustainable food systems, such as community gardens, food banks, food pantries and other agricultural projects that improve Native control of Native food systems. In 2012, FNDI awarded 31 grants totaling \$905,000 to 29 Native organizations dedicated to increasing food access and improving the health and nutrition of Native children and families. FNDI provides direct grant support, technical assistance and other resources that are broadly available. They also undertake research projects that build the

knowledge and understanding of Native agriculture and food systems issues.

Recent NAFSI grantees, described below, have been engaged in many innovative, food systems projects, and many were also nominated for this report. A full listing of annual FNDI and NAFSI grantees is available on FNDI's website, where many publications can be found that are valuable resources to those seeking to improve food systems within their own communities.

### **Bay Mills Community College, Brimley, Michigan**

Waishkey Bay Farm at Bay Mill Community College is a sustainable farm and orchard located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The farm's purpose is to recruit tribal youth to help grow, harvest and market fruits and vegetables.

### **Choctaw Fresh Produce, Choctaw, Mississippi\***

Food from the program's ongoing community garden will now be sold at the casino restaurant, while surplus fruits and vegetables will be sold throughout the community via a mobile farmers market. The project aims to increase access to healthy food on the Choctaw reservation while creating jobs and stimulating economic development.

**Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Portland, Oregon\***

CRITFC helps tribal fishers develop and expand market opportunities for salmon products. The project aims to increase opportunities for the fishers of the Columbia River tribes.

**Diné Community Advocacy Alliance, Gallup, New Mexico**

The alliance supports the Healthy Diné Nation Act and Junk Food Tax, which was initially vetoed by the Navajo Nation president, but subsequently passed. The act imposed a two percent sales tax on sugar-sweetened beverages and junk food, and eliminated sales tax on fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College, Hayward, Wisconsin**

Lac Courte is focusing on building capacity and expanding the college's Sustainable Agriculture Research Station (LSARS). LSARS will increase healthy food access by providing a mobile farmers market, online and telephone food-ordering service, and EBT-SNAP purchases.

**Lakota Ranch Beginning Farmer/Rancher Program, Kyle, South Dakota\***

The program is establishing an active gardening club on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Fruits and vegetables harvested will be sold at a local farmers market to promote healthier food choices.

**Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma, Ponca City, Oklahoma**

By expanding the local community greenhouse, the Ponca Tribe's goal is double fruit and vegetable production and increase food security in the community. Additionally, the funds will be used to host weekly diabetes health education and cooking classes.

**Pueblo of Nambe, Nambe Pueblo, New Mexico\***

The Community Farm Project will focus on creating more traditional meals with locally grown, highly nutritious food items. Nambe Pueblo is a food desert with issues of access to and affordability of fresh, local produce. The farm will expand with the eventual creation of a marketplace on pueblo land, instituting practices such as composting and seed saving, and working to revitalize Indigenous crops, harvest wild plants and raise hormone-free, locally slaughtered meats.

**Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa, Tama, Iowa\***

The Sac and Fox Tribe is focusing on expanding the Meskwaki Grower's Cooperative. The food co-op launched in 2013 and needs to expand to include a greenhouse, seed-saving program and food-preservation workshops, as well as increase co-op membership.

**Sustainable Moloka'i, Kaunakakai, Hawaii**

This project is launching the Moloka'i Food Hub, which will give the Native Hawaiian farming community better access to and control over its local food system. The food hub will help accurately manage orders and monitor product quality.

**Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Taos, New Mexico\***

Taos County Economic Development Corporation (TCEDC) coordinates the Native Food Sovereignty Alliance (NAFSA), including proactively recruiting and growing the membership base. TCEDC has helped NAFSA achieve 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt status and will continue to support and develop indigenous food systems to promote food security and health.

**Waimea Hawaiian Homesteaders' Association, Kamuela, Hawaii**

Through recent funding, Waimea and the Farming for the Working class project will enable another 10 Native Hawaiian homestead families to start actively farming their fallow land. The program consists of hands-on farm training, paired with classroom-based learning and business training.

**Big Pine Paiute Tribe of Owens Valley, California\***

The tribe will create a permaculture demonstration garden and an organic seed bank on the Big Pine Indian

Reservation, with the purpose of increasing availability of locally grown food, as well as knowledge of sustainable gardening practices and native plants. The project will provide entrepreneurship opportunities through a farmers market, and will supply tools and equipment for the community garden and greenhouse.

**San Carlos Apache Tribe, San Carlos, Arizona**

To address several social issues and diet-related diseases, and to build knowledge of nutrition, the tribe will create a detailed description and nutritional analysis of its pre-reservation Western Apache diet, work to retain valuable traditional knowledge and use it to inform strategies aimed at maintaining physical health and ecologically sustainable lifestyles. The tribe will share this knowledge with community members to build health-related programs and businesses in Apache communities.

**Diné College, Tsaile, Arizona**

The project will address the lack of access to healthy, affordable and traditional foods in the region directly around the college and revitalize traditional food systems by establishing a regional food policy and a farmers market, and conducting public education about Navajo food-system issues and agriculture.

**Hunkpati Investments, Inc.,  
Ft. Thompson, South Dakota**

Hunkpati's Crow Creek Fresh Food Initiative will provide fresh vegetables, gardening and entrepreneurial education, and youth employment on the Crow Creek Reservation. A planned community garden will have 10 personal plots for community members, leaving the rest for communal gardening. The project will facilitate community-wide farmers markets, provide nutrition and gardening education via the Teen Club, and provide work for teens by hiring them to care for the garden and run the farmers markets.

**Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope,  
Barrow, Alaska**

The Inupiat Community will provide locally grown vegetables, herbs and edible flowers to Arctic Slope Natives by using innovative technology to grow organic produce hydroponically with Tower Gardens® and LED lights, thus eliminating the need for soil and, during the winter, sunlight. The produce will allow community members to improve their diets and long-term health.

Currently available, plant-based foods are prohibitively expensive. The project also will allow the school system to take advantage of a farm-to-school program.

**Northwest Indian College,  
Bellingham, Wash.**

The Muckleshoot Tribe has partnered with Northwest Indian College to explore and promote an understanding of Native foods and increase food security in the Muckleshoot community. As part of the Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project, the tribe and college sponsor community gatherings to discuss local, healthy food options, as well as traditional foods. As part of this ongoing dialogue, the college hosted the third annual Our Food Is Our Medicine gathering, which consisted of three tracks, including Teachings of the Plant People, Healing Our Waters, and Community Activism. These community-based learning opportunities involved hands-on workshops that engaged participants and helped marry the past with the present by offering a modern approach to incorporating traditional foods into a daily diet. Through traditional foods feasts, the project is able to celebrate these foods and introduce them to younger community members, even offering a cross-generational culture-sharing time.

**Oglala Sioux Parks & Recreation Authority,  
Kyle, South Dakota**

This project makes a traditional food source, buffalo, readily available to Oglala Lakota tribal members who otherwise would not have access to the meat. There is no outlet to purchase it on the

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation unless a tribal member purchases a bison hunt, which is limited and expensive for low-income families. The opportunity to buy processed buffalo meat allows tribal members to purchase what they need instead of paying the cost of a hunt and the processing of hundreds of pounds of meat at a time. It will be available at tribal farmers market sites and transported in a mobile freezer truck to rural areas.

#### **The Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin, Oneida, Wisconsin\***

The project will improve traditional food security through enhanced food-preservation processes of organic, heirloom white corn (a culturally important tribal food), which will prevent crop loss due to mold, pests and insects. This project will address improvements in white corn harvesting, storage, shelling and the processing of products.

#### **Painted Desert Demonstration Project (STAR School), Flagstaff, Arizona\***

The K-8 STAR School adjacent to the Navajo Nation will partner with the Navajo community of Sand Springs Farm on recently partitioned Hopi lands to pilot the first farm-to-school project in northern Arizona as a model for Navajo and Hopi schools and farms. Project partners will research and document state and federal requirements, certify the farm to supply public-school meals, strengthen school

gardens, prepare and disseminate a farm-to-school procedure manual, and nurture additional Navajo and Hopi initiatives.

## **NB3 FOUNDATION**

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The NB3 Foundation is a national Native American nonprofit organization established by four-time PGA TOUR winner and NBC Sport/Golf Channel TV Analyst, Notah Begay III.<sup>73</sup> The mission of NB3 Foundation, a Native-led intermediary, is to reduce childhood obesity and Type 2 Diabetes among Native children. Since 2009, NB3 has awarded more than \$1.6 million to more than 50 tribes and Native nonprofits to help increase access to healthy and affordable food, nutrition education and physical activity, and to build the capacity of Native communities to develop community-based solutions to reverse trends of childhood obesity and Type 2 Diabetes. In addition, NB3 has reinvested more than seven million in direct service programming, including nutrition-education programming, food-access pilot projects, community garden and traditional foods projects, evidence-based sport programming, physical activity/sports camps and clinics, technical assistance to tribal communities and nonprofits, and research and evaluation

work with the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health. With funding from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community in 2015 in launching its Seeds of Native Health campaign. NB3's Promising Program grants focus support existing programs focused on obesity and diabetes prevention through healthy nutrition and healthy food access, capacity building to evaluate current programming and capacity building to implement policy change.

Many of the 2015 Intertribal Food Scan nominees have benefitted from NB3 Foundation grants, including the STAR School, Tohono O'odham Community Action, Zuni Youth Enrichment Project, Cheyenne

## INDIAN LAND TENURE FOUNDATION

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Food systems work is challenging enough without access to land, a critical point of entry for anyone in this space, and frequently one of the most fraught for Native people. Centuries of federal policies have left tribes with a fraction of their original land base, if they retain access to their original homelands at all. But thanks to the efforts of the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF), the return to tribally owned, tribally controlled land is a little easier to navigate.

In the 1990s a concerned group of Indian landowners, tribal leaders and land rights advocates came together to begin to effect change in Indian land tenure, which is at the heart of so many issues in Indian Country. In 1998 the ILTF was founded with seed funding from the Northwest Area Foundation. ILTF's mission is to work directly with Indian landowners to gain control of Indian lands, create financial models that convert land into leverage for Indian landowners, reform legal mechanisms related to recapturing the physical, cultural and economic assets for Indian people and strengthen sovereignty of Indian land. ILTF makes loans and grants to Indian nations and nonprofit organizations to provide support to projects focused on education, cultural awareness, economic opportunity and legal reform. It has helped tribes recover approximately 125,000 acres since it was founded.

The Tanka Fund<sup>75</sup> is a national campaign to return buffalo to the land, diets and economies of American Indian people. The Tanka Fund was created through a partnership between Native American Natural Foods (NANF) and the ILTF to provide a broad base of support for the effort. The Tanka Fund was founded in January of 2012. Over the next 10 years, the Tanka Fund's goal is to convert one million acres of land to buffalo production so that tribal nations, their members

and reservation lands all benefit from the return of the buffalo. As stated by the fund: “Buffalo can help reverse the epidemic of diet-related illness, as it’s an exceptionally nutritious, heart-healthy protein. A buffalo economy can bring sustainable prosperity to reservations plagued by poverty.” The fund’s vision is to assist in the sustainable growth and engagement of Native people and Native buffalo producers who often lack access to land, bison, capital and training. It provides education to the public about the benefits of buffalo restoration while working with Native communities to assist in scaling up the buffalo economy within Indian Country

## TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

### Innovation Through Education

Thirty-seven tribal colleges and universities serve American Indian and Alaska Native populations across the country. Created to serve geographically isolated tribes, most tribal colleges and universities are located close to the tribal communities they serve, offering a variety of educational opportunities. Just as the tribes and tribally led organizations profiled in this area are driving change in food systems, colleges and universities are also innovators in this space. With their focus on education, tribal colleges and universities are providing their students and university communities with opportunities for classroom and experiential learning about food and agriculture. In classes, laboratories, gardens and greenhouses around the country, students at these schools are engaging in food systems work at every level. Profiled here are just some of the exciting projects happening right now.

#### **Ilisagvik College**

Through the college's Cooperative Extension program, Ilisagvik College in Barrow, Alaska, offers a variety of educational options around

food for students and community members alike, including access to healthy recipes, educational information on food storage and cooking classes for all ages.

#### **Diné College**

With six locations inside the Navajo Nation, Diné College's website proudly proclaims, "Navajo Nation is Our Campus." The college offers several exciting opportunities to students and Diné communities in Arizona and New Mexico, including agriculture-focused course offerings in range management, farm management, livestock management and natural resources. The college also sponsors an agriculture science camp in the summer for pre-college students and an Indigenous Food Conference, which teaches attendees about traditional foods, food sovereignty, dry-farming techniques, and more.

The conference recently showcased another exciting project of the college: A mobile farmers market.

#### **Tohono O'odham Community College**

To better support the preservation of Tohono O'odham language and culture, one of Tohono O'odham Community College's institutional goals, the college recently began an agriculture and natural resources program for students. Additionally, the college offers special topics in Tohono O'odham food systems,

giving students another way of preserving Tribal culture.

### **Haskell Indian Nations University**

Through the university's research initiative, Tribal Colleges Research Grants Program, Haskell is working with the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to fund the "Food Deserts, Edible Landscapes and Healthier Choices in Kansas" project. The project strives to increase access to fresh produce for reservation communities through agricultural education and partnerships with local, tribal communities. Students participating in the project can take advantage of both classroom and experiential learning. Courses explore the link between horticulture and agricultural economics, as well as best agricultural practices, and a real-world gardening operation offers Haskell students the opportunity to grow both heirloom and hybrid crops.

### **Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College**

Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College partners with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community on the community's wild rice restoration project, which helps to increase local food security and access to traditional foods while teaching students traditional agricultural practices. The restoration project has been underway since the late 1990s, and has expanded to 13 wetlands sites. The college's

involvement has helped the community's planting efforts: In 2014, the college was able to contribute USDA funding to the community's wild rice efforts and, alongside community members, students from the college helped to plant 1,650 pounds of wild rice in nearby wetlands.

### **Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College**

In 2012, Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College partnered with the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, the USDA, and University of Minnesota Extension Service to sponsor the Bimaaji'idiwin Ojibwe Garden Project. The garden serves as an educational tool for community members and college students alike, offering weekly gardening lessons in the demonstration garden, as well as community workshops. The garden project grows food by utilizing both traditional Ojibwe cropping systems and more contemporary practices. Internships with the garden project are also available; interns assigned to the garden visit with local community members to provide hands-on gardening assistance for anyone who wants to begin growing his or her own food.

### **Leech Lake Tribal College**

The Leech Lake Tribal College (LLTC) community has been collaborating with several different state and local partners to start a community dialogue around food and promote Anishinaabe

values, including mino-bimaadiziwin (the good life). LLTC recently partnered with the Leech Lake Statewide Health Improvement Program and local public health officials, becoming the first tribal college in the country to join the Partnership for a Healthier America's Health Campus Initiative. LLTC also leverages the community's connection to culture to increase access to healthy foods, especially traditional foods. They are supported in this effort by an award from Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota. This program supports the community through popular weekly meals.

### **White Earth Tribal and Community College**

The White Earth Tribal and Community College Extension Service sponsors an annual Wild Food Summit, teaching local community members, both Native and non-Native, foraging techniques. The extension service also hosts a variety of activities and educational opportunities for the college and community, including seed saving days, canning classes, and more.

### **Blackfeet Community College**

The goal of the Blackfeet Community College Greenhouse Project is to preserve Native plants, particularly those that are currently threatened with extinction. Since the start of the project in 2000, the Greenhouse Project has grown a variety of plants traditionally used for medicinal and ceremonial purposes, as well as

edible plants like corn and cucumbers. All plants grown in the greenhouse are available for sale, helping the project to be self-sustaining. Additionally, the greenhouse supports the local community by growing grasses, such as sweetgrass or buffalo grass, that help replenish overharvested areas.

### **Aaniiih Nakoda Community College**

The Aaniiih Nakoda Extension Program's original greenhouse was built in 1998 and replaced in 2006 with an improved greenhouse facility that could support the college's scientific, educational, and outreach needs. The greenhouse not only facilitates agricultural science learning among the college's student community, it also serves as a language-learning tool for students of the community's White Clay Immersion School. Coordinating with the greenhouse is a three-acre demonstration farm maintained by student interns.

### **Ft. Peck Community College**

The Agriculture Department and Extension Service at Ft. Peck Community College provides students with a variety of educational opportunities in agriculture. Ft. Peck's agricultural programming focuses on supporting and increasing the number of Native beginning farmers and ranchers in the college's regional area.

### **Little Big Horn College**

The Greenhouse Project at Little Big Horn College provides both educational opportunities and fresh, affordable produce to college students and community members alike. The greenhouse is open to local schools and families for tours and educational demonstrations. Currently, the greenhouse grows fresh produce, including watermelons, tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, and cucumbers, but the college would like to expand this program to incorporate more traditional and medicinal foods and plants. By growing more traditional plants, the college can educate the local community about culture in addition to horticulture.

### **Nebraska Indian Community College**

The Traditional Food Course offered at Nebraska Indian College provides students the chance to explore the food systems of Native American tribes in the surrounding region, both before and after colonization. The course gives particular focus to the connection between traditional foods and food systems, and Native health.

### **Little Priest Tribal College**

In 2011, Little Priest Tribal College began plans for the Common Ground Garden, a year-round growing space for organic produce that will benefit the local community through free healthy

food. The garden will provide internship opportunities to interested students, and hopes to sponsor summer farmers markets, community workshops and “lunch and learn” sessions during regular semester hours. In addition to the garden, the college offers a Food, Health and Wellness program, which gives interested students a chance to earn an Associate of Science degree in indigenous science, with a focus in either health or environmental science.

### **Navajo Technical University**

The dynamic Culinary Arts Program at Navajo Technical University helps graduates impact food systems in a variety of ways. Since its inception, the program has offered students the chance to learn restaurant management skills while they train in a professional cooking and baking environment. Recently, the program and its students started working directly with local community members and food systems with the Navajo Tech food truck project, a mobile kitchen where students serve healthy fusion cuisine to local community members. Blending traditional foods with contemporary cuisine, the students prepare for careers in the culinary arts while celebrating their heritage and showcasing healthy food options to the community.

### **Institute of American Indian Arts**

The Institute of American Indian Arts emphasizes healthy eating and traditional foods, and provides agriculturally related education and technical assistance to students attending the Institute, as well as members of the 22 tribes and pueblos in New Mexico. Students on campus are able to learn experientially in campus greenhouses, where they can study the life cycles of Monarch butterflies and milkweed plants. Students can also take advantage of healthy food directly by visiting campus cafe Bon Appetit, which features a sustainable menu of locally grown food.

### **Cankdeska Cikana Community College**

The Diabetes Education in Tribal Schools (DETS) program at Cankdeska Cikana strives to decrease the prevalence of diabetes among Native people through the promotion of a K–12 curriculum that promotes healthy lifestyles and nutrition. The community college representative for DETS is responsible for a seven-state area.

### **Fort Berthold Community College**

In 2010, Fort Berthold Community College, in collaboration with the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Ft. Berthold Reservation, launched a “Know Your Farmer” project to train beginning farmers and ranchers, focusing particularly on issues relevant to Native producers, such as trust land management. In

addition to this exciting program, Ft. Berthold Community College has a thriving agriculture department, which offers students the opportunity to learn horticulture science, cultural gardening, and more. The college provides experiential learning through a combination of private, community and 4-H sponsored gardens.

### **Sitting Bull College**

Sitting Bull College (SBC) has several emerging garden projects promoting food sovereignty and food security in eight districts on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. Guided in these efforts by Lakota and Dakota elders, who are well-versed in traditional ecological knowledge, the gardens provide sustainable organic food and serve as a teaching tool, both for gardening knowledge and for language acquisition. SBC has been able to use the gardens to support a Language Nest for children’s garden designs, as well as a Medicine Wheel Garden and traditional fruit orchard. The projects have support from the community as well as the faculty, staff and student body of SBC.

### **Turtle Mountain Community College**

Through the Anishinaabe Learning, Cultural and Wellness Center, Turtle Mountain Community College plans to provide the campus community and regional residents with a one-stop learning environment for health, wellness and culture. The Center, located between a lake and wooded area, is a natural fit for the study of ecology and resource management. An on-site greenhouse will serve as a research and education center for students studying traditional plants and horticulture, and greenhouse/hoop house workshops will also reach community members who wish to improve local food systems by installing these innovative growing tools. The center will increase Turtle Mountain's already robust community gardening initiatives, which provide the campus and local community with free, introductory gardening seminars from certified master gardeners.

### **United Tribes Technical Colleges**

The Nutrition and Foodservice Program at United Tribes Technical College does more than teach students to prepare food – the program also teaches students how to grow food. By incorporating a campus garden project, the program enables students to source the food for their culinary endeavors by walking out of the kitchen and into the garden, where the program grows abundant fresh

produce, including traditional foods like squash and corn. Students learn food science, food safety and nutrition, and engage in culinary arts by preparing meals for class and for the campus community. The program also emphasizes the correlation between food and nutrition, and students have reported that their education has changed the way they prepare food at home.

### **Oglala Lakota College**

The agricultural extension program at Oglala Lakota College supports the local Pine Ridge reservation through a variety of community-based opportunities, including an annual Farm and Ranch Day and organic gardening workshops. Every year, the program sponsors the Wahi Paza fall festival, which honors the earth and the year of work that the community has put into it. The festival includes a cook-off for traditional foods – Lakota wojapi – and an exhibition for locally grown garden vegetables. In addition to these exciting community programs, the college also sponsors a gardening and canning class for community members who want to grow and preserve their own fresh produce.

### **College of Menominee Nation**

In partnership with the University of Wisconsin, the College of Menominee Nation offers gardening classes, seed

saving and storage-technique workshops and winterizing methods through the college's Mō nahekā ē hsaekaeyah (We Garden) program. These sessions are open to the community, as well as the students, and are free of charge to attend.

### **Sinte Gleska University**

At Sinte Gleska University (SGU), a focus on community education encompasses food systems work through the Institute of Tribal Lands greenhouse project. The project works with the local Rosebud Sioux reservation community, first using workshops to discuss gardening techniques, then helping community members to actually build those community gardens. The tribal lands program has also built a school greenhouse and tree farm, student-run projects that teach Sinte Gleska students how to operate an agribusiness through hands-on experience. From April to September, the SGU greenhouse is open for business, selling seedlings for local gardens. SGU also features a university Bison Ranch that provides 25,000 pounds of bison meat to the university community, as well as the reservation community.

### **Sisseton Wahpeton College**

In 2000, Sisseton Wahpeton began its Extension Outreach Program, which supports healthy lifestyles among tribal

youth through a variety of programs, including gardening workshops, school and community gardens, and food preservation techniques. The college offers classes on traditional plants and herbs of the Dakota people, and also gives students the chance to earn an Associate of Science in general agricultural studies or sustainable environmental science. Supported by the foundational knowledge in these fields that they have gained at Sisseton Wahpeton, graduates of both degree programs may go on to pursue Bachelor's degrees in related fields.

### **Northwest Indian College**

In addition to the college's strong partnership with the Muckleshoot Tribe and Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty / Food is Our Medicine, Northwest Indian College also offers students and the surrounding Lummi tribal community opportunities to participate in a variety of engaging food systems work, much of which is done through the college's Traditional Plants and Foods Program. This program supports many initiatives, all designed to promote Native self-sufficiency and wellness through indigenous foods and medicines. One of these programs is a Medicine Wheel community garden. Food from the garden supports learning through cooking classes and also supplements the food stock of local families. Medicinal herbs and plants from the garden are also used

as teaching tools, and are turned into medicine. Classes are open to students and community members. The Traditional Plants and Foods Program supports tribal communities near NWIC, and in the past decade, multiple tribes have worked with the program to celebrate their cultural heritage around traditional food and reignite a community passion for growing and harvesting that food.

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# LESSONS FOR FUNDERS

## Looking for Innovation, Promoting Diversity, Overcoming Challenges

### FINDING AND FUNDING INNOVATIONS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Every program nominated for the 2015 scan expressed a need for sustained funding. The lack of dedicated funding authorities at federal agencies for tribal programming frequently leads to funding gaps that are not always addressed by private sector funders.

Available federal funds designed to provide resources for local foods, community food projects, marketing of foods and healthy food access are generally not available as set-aside programs for tribal governments, tribal nonprofits, or tribal communities. The Indian Country programs discussed within this document may or may not have been able, in one way or another, to compete for federal funds with other non-tribal programs. This makes for two related problems: first, small communities with limited resources competing against larger players for limited resources. Second, a lack of continuity of dedicated

funding to Indian Country food systems, which undermines growth and sustainability of the projects highlighted.

While every tribe and every tribal member is different culturally, championing one's own work does not typically occur, even when that work is vitally important to local food systems and the continuation of culture. For this reason, grant application processes and meet-and-greets with funders may not always surface the most innovative or dynamic aspects of a particular program. Food systems work in American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities also frequently serves only one location, which may, in some instances, be very remote. Further, because food systems work in Indian Country is so deeply intertwined with each individual tribe's rich culture, innovation from one tribe to the next may look very different, so programming may not be exactly replicable across tribal lines, particularly when dealing with tribal communities that range wildly in size, financial capacity, natural resources base and proximity.

However, as the 2015 scan shows, today's innovative programs in Native food systems work each share some key characteristics, and looking for these in some form may help funders determine how to support potential grantees.

- A focus on traditional practices, and a way to bring those practices forward into the present.
- Youth development, especially projects that pair youth with elders in a mentorship role.
- For urban projects, programs that adapt land-based growing techniques for the city; for more rural projects, new technologies mixed with traditional methods.
- Projects that impact the supply chain at multiple points simultaneously. Successes within tribal communities quite often reflect Native control of Native resources and, for food, that means Native control from farm to fork. Programs like Choctaw Fresh not only produce their own food, they also handle their own transportation logistics, keeping the profits in the community and controlling costs.
- Food sovereignty-focused programming that incorporates financial or business-planning skills, meeting the dual goals of most tribal governments and the communities they serve: Financial empowerment and self-governance.

- Community and tribal government support. For tribal programs, this could come in many different forms, ranging from incorporation of the food systems work within the health systems or the economic systems of the tribe, as opposed to stand-alone projects, and inclusion of food systems work into traditional practices of the tribes

We hope that funders who embrace the diversity of Indian Country food systems work will consider these features as they begin next year's funding cycles. Finding innovative programming in tribal spaces may seem challenging but, as the programs lifted up for this year's scan definitively show, seeking them out and supporting their work is well worth it. Every funder who supported the work profiled here has made a difference, not only for this year's nominees, but for the communities and people they serve.

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