

NOURISHING NATIVE FOODS & HEALTH

A Core Program of First Nations Development Institute



FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

First Nations Development Institute recognizes that accessing healthy food is a challenge for many Native American children and families. And without access to healthy food, a nutritious diet and good health are out of reach.

Because of this important need, we provide financial support and technical assistance to tribes and Native nonprofit organizations so that they can build sustainable food systems that improve health, strengthen food security, and increase control over Native agriculture and food systems.

The community partners highlighted here have been supported by First Nations' *Nourishing Native Foods & Health* program grants.

Community Partner Spotlight — 'Āina Momona

Living Off the Land Once More on Moloka'i

'Āina Momona (Hawaiian for the fertile or rich land) is a Native Hawaiian-led community organization dedicated to environmental sustainability, food security and resilience, and social justice.

Its wider aim is to equip the community with the skills needed to become self-sufficient and sustainable. To do this, the organization works to rebuild traditional food systems, protect Indigenous knowledge, produce Native crops, and restore ancestral land management practices. It also builds capacity in the community by offering educational classes, training, and fellowship programs.

Program Director **Jane Au** says 'Āina Momona's next big endeavors center on scaling its food sovereignty work and expanding land restoration efforts on the island of Moloka'i. 'Āina Momona's current land base, Keawanui, includes eight acres of agricultural land, 55 acres of loko i'a (traditional fishpond) along the shore, and over 300 acres of Mauka (inland) land.



'Āina Momona's kia'i (protectors) pass each other stones to add to Keawanui fishpond's rock walls. Photo credit: Momi Amber Afelin

“This area was once a bountiful landscape that produced starches and protein for the island. Today, it is heavily eroded, covered in non-edible invasive species, and impacted by former colonial agricultural practices. Over the next few months, we will be building out a native plant nursery to begin propagating native crops for our future work inland.”

*— Program Director Jane Au
janeau@hawaii.edu*



Learn more and support 'Āina Momona's work directly at kaainamomona.org.

  @AianaMomona

Q&A with A-dae



**A-dae Romero-Briones,
J.D., LL.M.**

Cochiti/Kiowa

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS
NATIVE AGRICULTURE &
FOOD SYSTEMS

A U.S. Fulbright Scholar, A-dae earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Policy from Princeton University, a J.D. from Arizona State University, and an LL.M. in Food and Agricultural Law from the University of Arkansas.

Her thesis was on the Food Safety Modernization Act as it applied to the federal-tribal relationship. She writes extensively about the protection of tribal traditional foods.

“In the last 10 years, it’s been amazing to see the synergic changes that are happening throughout Indian Country. We all need each other.”

Q. What is important for supporters to know about Native agriculture and food systems initiatives?

A. Indigenous people and their food systems are resilient. We have withstood assault and attempts to starve, change, and alter every facet of our food systems, whether it be through displacement of our lands, alteration of our natural spaces like water and soil, or prohibition from our natural gathering and hunting grounds. *We continue to push for access and protection of our food systems because we inherently know that it’s for the benefit of humanity that we care for our foods.*

Q. What most inspires you about the work being done in Native communities related to Native agriculture and food systems?

A. There is an inherent understanding between people who work in the food space that food is a connection to our past, to our people, and to our lands that ensures we as Indigenous people exist and continue to exist. We don’t have to say it to one another. We don’t have to explain it. We just kind of know. When you meet an Indigenous person doing food work, they just give you that feeling, and it helps me continue to move past the barriers or problems and just get the work done. *To Gather on. Fish on. Hunt on.*

Q. Could you share more about meaningful policy and other changes you have witnessed over the last 10 to 15 years that have made an impact in Native communities?

A. There are several I can think of. First is the resurgence of young Indigenous people who want to know and learn of their Indigenous lifeways, including food systems. It’s an institutional change where young people are calling to learn, to be taught, and to gain access to knowledge and skills that were once targeted for exclusion by federal policies such as boarding schools.

The second is related to the first, but now we have a whole crew of savvy scientists, lawyers, doctors, nutritionists, teachers, and engineers who are using both their professional talents and their Indigenous talents to ensure that our food systems continue to function. They are creating new standards and new ways of viewing a bicameral system of federal policy and Indigenous world views.

Lastly, there are a great many Indigenous people who dedicate their lives to learning the lifeways of their people and choose not to go to western universities. *Without those individuals who choose to be the stewards of our homelands, we would be working without purpose.*

Food Connects Oneida Nation to Cultural Identity

The Oneida Nation of Wisconsin is restoring its local food system in a manner that generates wealth and health in the community.

This includes growing traditional crops such as heirloom Oneida White Corn on the Nation's *Tsyunhehkwa* farm, and operating a farm-to-table cattle and bison program, apple orchard, and cannery. Products are sold at the Oneida retail store and farmers market, and locally produced foods are integrated into the schools, senior centers, and other tribal programs.

With the onset of COVID-19, the Oneida Nation saw an increased demand for its food products and services. **William Ver Voort**, Oneida Community Integrated Food Systems Coordinator, explains, "Our cannery is processing and producing record-breaking numbers of traditional food products. People are returning to what we have known all along, that our foods really anchor us into our identity and wellness."

To that end, Oneida is pursuing a new food innovation facility to house its cannery program. Through this and the many components of the Oneida Community Integrated Food System, the tribe is taking control of its food supply, investing in its economy, and restoring health, sovereignty, and nationhood to its people.



Learn more at:

oneida-nsn.gov/resources/oneida-community-integrated-food-systems

Find updates on all the food system inputs:

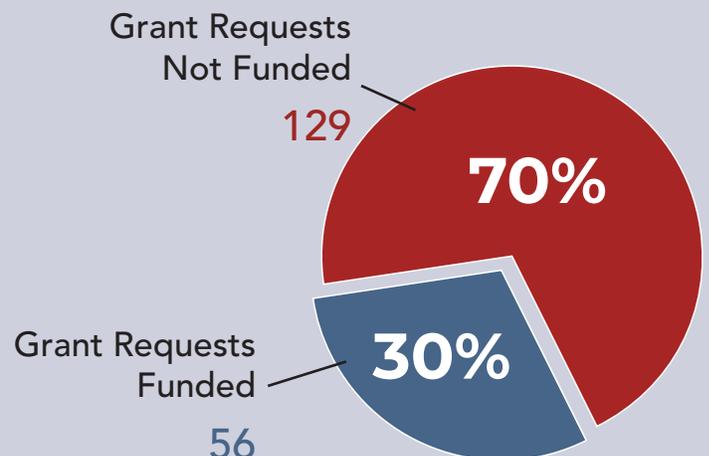
- @oneidacannery
- @OneidaApples
- @OFMWI

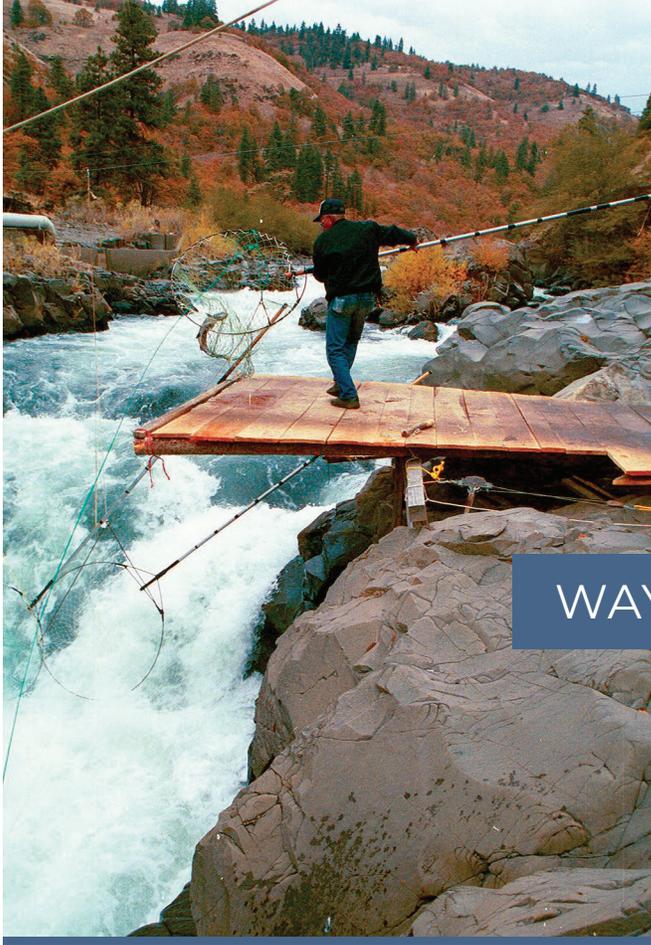
Directly support Oneida's food sovereignty efforts by contacting:

William Ver Voort • 920.869.4595 • wvvoor@oneidanation.org

UNMET NEED

On average over the last five years, First Nations' *Nourishing Native Foods & Health* program was only able to provide funding for **30%** of the grant requests received from Native-controlled nonprofits and tribal government programs. With your support, we can help fund even more Indigenous-led agriculture and food system initiatives.





“ First Nations is committed to supporting the robust network of Native community groups that are at the forefront of food sovereignty efforts. It is inspiring to see fresh, sustainable, fair and culturally-compatible food more accessible to Native children, families and communities.”

– Michael Roberts (Tlingit)
PRESIDENT & CEO

WAYS YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We are grateful to our community partners and funders who share our vision of contributing to healthy, thriving traditional food systems and sustainable food economies that are community-led by Native people for Native people.

- Support food sovereignty efforts by investing directly in Native-led initiatives. Visit First Nations’ interactive map to identify grassroots initiatives across the U.S. at firstnations.org/grantmaking.
- Host a screening of First Nations’ new film GATHER in your own community. Download our Screening Toolkit: nativefoodsystems.org/toolkit.
- Educate yourself about food sovereignty efforts by reading publications at First Nations’ Knowledge Center at firstnations.org/knowledge-center.

For more information on *Nourishing Native Foods & Health* grantees, projects, Impact Stories, and other resources, visit firstnations.org/our-programs.



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