



FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Food *Sovereignty* ASSESSMENTS

A Tool to Grow Healthy Native Communities



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, as their support made this publication possible. However, the views in this report are those of the authors alone and do not reflect the opinions of our funders. This report was authored by Raymond Foxworth at First Nations Development Institute. We thank John Hendrix, Michelle Desjarlais and Joseph Madera for their assistance in the collection of data.

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Suggested Citation: *First Nations Development Institute. (2017). Food Sovereignty Assessments: A Tool to Grow Healthy Native Communities. Longmont, CO: First Nations Development Institute.*

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OUR MISSION

... to strengthen American Indian economies to support healthy Native communities. We invest in and create innovative institutions and models that strengthen asset control and support economic development for American Indian people and their communities.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE

We believe that when armed with the appropriate resources, Native peoples hold the capacity and ingenuity to ensure the sustainable, economic, spiritual and cultural well-being of their communities.

ABOUT *the* PROJECT

In 2016 and 2017, with the generous support of the Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, First Nations Development Institute (First Nations) was able to provide 39 grants totaling nearly \$650,000 to Native communities. This generous support allowed these communities to develop and implement efforts to assess their communities' food systems and establish forward-looking plans designed to transform the future of their local food systems.

In 2004, First Nations released the *Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool* (FSAT), and a subsequent FSAT update in 2014, as part of First Nations' mission to develop resources and tools to assist Native communities in local asset control. Since then, food sovereignty assessments have been a starting point for many communities as they work to develop mechanisms to increase local food-system control.

A community food sovereignty assessment is a community-developed and community-led process for assessing local food-system control. In Native communities, food sovereignty assessments are conducted to:

- 1 Understand historical and current trends of the local food systems.**
- 2 Develop plans to increase local control of the food system.**

A food sovereignty assessment puts Native communities in the driver's seat, as it empowers communities to identify their own goals, methods and process for data collection, analysis and strategy development.

Fundamentally, a food sovereignty assessment puts Indigenous community-based knowledge and practices at the center of community assessment and development. It allows communities to develop and implement assessment tools and strategies informed by their own methods, methodologies, practices and priorities. This community-based strategy for examining community challenges really does allow Native communities to individualize and personalize community food assessments to their individual needs. This allows data to be transformative, moving from data being about a Native community to being explicitly for a Native community.

What is **FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?**

"For many tribal communities, the term sovereignty is used as a term that recognizes the right of Native peoples to retain their cultural identity and to acknowledge and reserve fundamental rights granted in treaties and other legal documents. Strongly connected to this is the notion that Native people have the right to choose what they eat as individuals and as a culturally distinct community. For many centuries, this right has not been honored and the foods Native people now dominantly consume were introduced through imposing a diet on Native people and their communities.

"Food sovereignty is about unraveling that diet and decolonizing local food systems — from consumption to production. In many ways, food sovereignty is a method that supports the revitalization of traditional land-management practices and upholds cultural continuity. But at its heart, food sovereignty promotes Native economic and political sovereignty and traditional food knowledge as a means to promote strong and healthy Native communities and people."

~ First Nations Development Institute.
2014, *Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool*
(2nd Edition). Longmont: CO.

Why does a **COMMUNITY-CENTERED STRATEGY** matter?

In mainstream society, researchers and others who lead assessments focus on collecting similar data points and indicators across communities. This allows researchers to aggregate data and make generalized assumptions and findings across these communities. In this methodological framework prevalent in mainstream society, Native communities lose the ability to have data collected about their own individual and unique social context. The focus on aggregated and generalizable data collection, like all federal and state agency datasets, puts a focus on indicators not designed or developed by Native people themselves and typically focuses on deficit, difference, disparity, disadvantage and dysfunction.¹

The essence of a community food sovereignty assessment turns this idea on its head. A community food sovereignty assessment allows Native communities to construct data-collection processes that allow for uniqueness, place and also culturally-specific epistemology that are important to build healthy Native communities. In other words, at the heart of community food sovereignty assessment is the promotion of Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing about land, food, body and community. A community food sovereignty assessment tells its own unique story of a community and the data allow communities to imagine their distinct futures.

¹ Maggie Walter and Chris Andersen, *Indigenous Statistics: A Quantitative Research Methodology* (Left Coast Press, 2013).

Why conduct a **FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ASSESSMENT**?

To create strategies to reclaim local food-system control, we must first understand the decline of local food-system control. This will uncover the opportunities to reclaim local food systems and reclaim Native food assets for Native community benefit.

A food sovereignty assessment (FSA) is a collaborative and participative process that systematically examines a range of community food assets in order to inform social and economic change and begin the process of strengthening a food system. The FSA takes a solutions-oriented approach that looks at assets and resources as well as problems. This process has the potential to truly promote local food-system control by increasing knowledge about food-related needs and resources, and by building collaboration and capacity.



Our Vision for Making Change Happen in Native Communities:

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ASSESSMENTS

FIRST NATIONS STRATEGIES

PROVIDE DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT to NATIVE COMMUNITIES

Through grantmaking, First Nations is able to provide grant resources to Native communities to support local efforts.



PROVIDE RESOURCES, TRAINING and TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE to NATIVE COMMUNITIES

By providing resources, training and technical assistance to Native communities and organizations engaged in community-based work, First Nations is able to increase access to information, diverse practices and increase local knowledge that values, complements and enhances existing community-based frameworks.



BUILD MOVEMENTS and NETWORKS ACROSS NATIVE COMMUNITIES

First Nations provides regional and nationally-focused trainings that allow Native communities to come together, network, share best practices and lessons learned with the goal of building connections and momentum across Native communities.



COMMUNITY-LEVEL CHANGE

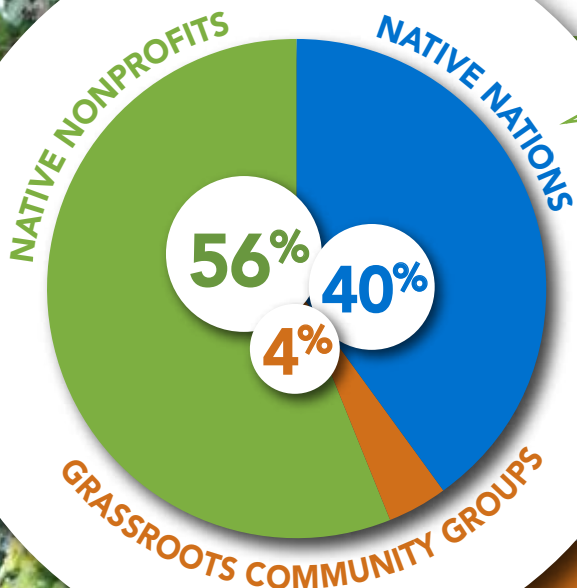
- Native communities develop individualized food assessment plans that are rooted in community knowledge and meet community needs.
- Native communities develop and prioritize their own goals for local food assessments, be it examining traditional or healthy food access, economic leakage, food-related business activity, and tribal policy. Thus, financial resources that may not be available from other sources allow Native communities to initiate and control community engagement, data collection, analysis and data sharing.
- Native organizations and communities gain additional tools, skills and knowledge that can help inform their work to increase local food-system knowledge and strategies.



- Native communities develop stronger connections, create networks of mentorship across communities.

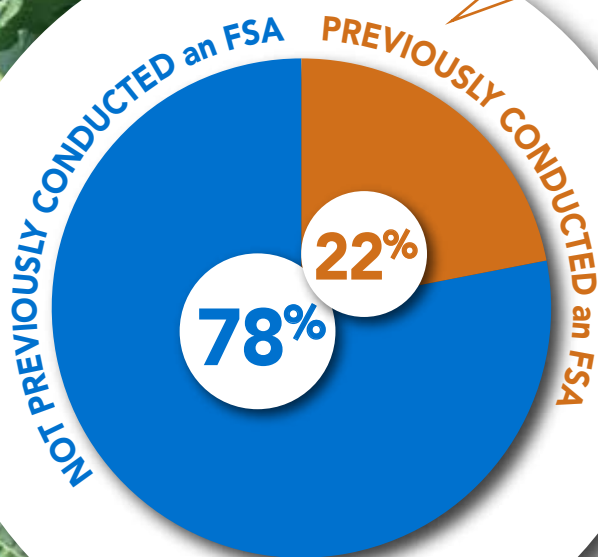


Who applied for food sovereignty assessment grants?



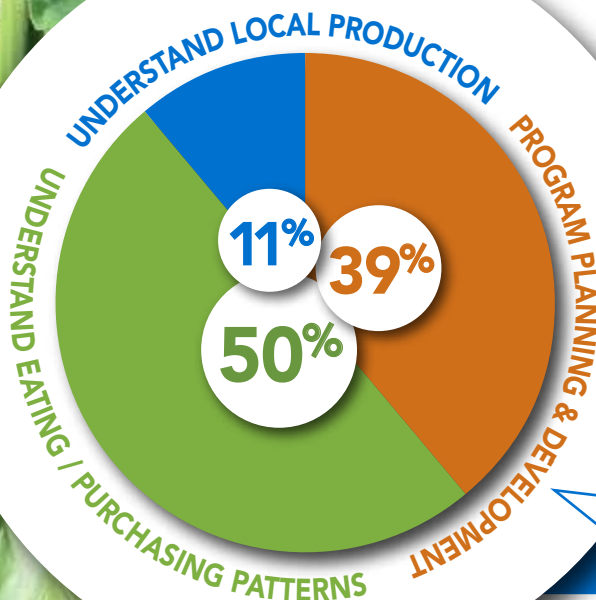
In 2016 and 2017, First Nations released three requests for proposals to support Native communities in conducting food sovereignty assessments. In total, First Nations received 89 grant requests from Native communities and organizations, totaling more than \$1.36 million. Two applications were from grassroots community groups (4%), 51 applications were from Native nonprofit organizations (56%) and 36 were from Native nations or departments (40%).

Among applicants, who had previously conducted a food assessment?



In total, 20 of the Native communities or nonprofits that applied for a food sovereignty assessment grant had previously conducted a food assessment (22% of communities supported). On average, these assessments were at least five years old, and communities and organizations were looking to update their data or develop new plans to move forward. A total of 69 Native communities or nonprofits applied to conduct a food sovereignty assessment for the very first time (78%).

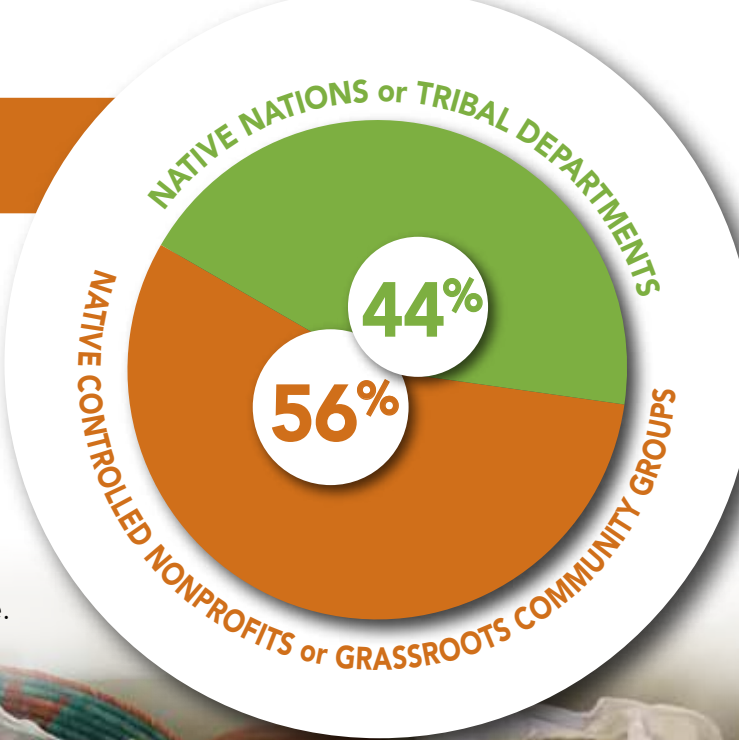
Among those who had previously conducted a food assessment, they noted that their previous assessment was used for program planning and development, to increase knowledge of household and individual eating and/or purchasing patterns, and to understand the needs of producers locally. In total, of those that had conducted a previous food assessment, 50% conducted their previous assessment to better understand household and individual eating and/or purchasing patterns, 39% conducted their previous assessment for program planning or development (including understanding nutrition education needs, land use needs and other kinds of feasibility studies), and 11% conducted their previous assessment to better understand local production. Most of the communities that had previously conducted an assessment used multiple methods for assessment (surveys, focus groups and other kinds of mapping methods). Moreover, most were looking at a small or targeted community sample as opposed to collecting data reservation-wide.



What was the primary purpose of previous food assessments?

Community partners receiving support to conduct a food sovereignty assessment

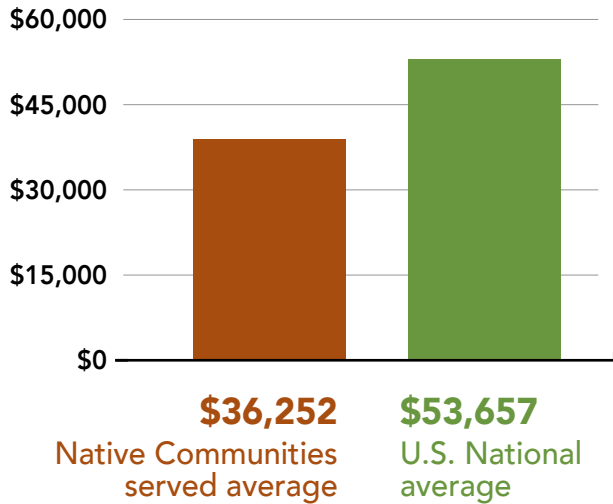
From 2016-2017, First Nations was able to provide 39 grants to Native communities totaling nearly \$650,000 to conduct food sovereignty assessments. Twenty-two grants were awarded to Native-controlled nonprofits or grassroots community groups without a 501(c)(3) designation, and 17 were awarded to Native nations. These grants were made possible through the generous support of the Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation and W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Of the 39 communities supported, nine had previously conducted a food sovereignty assessment and the other 30 communities were conducting an assessment for the first time.



What does national data say about communities served?

In total, the 39 organizations or tribes that received funds serve over 80 distinct communities. According to the USDA food desert map, 80 percent of the communities served are located in a "food desert."² The USDA defines a food desert as mostly impoverished areas where fresh fruit, vegetables and other healthful whole foods are difficult to find largely due a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



U.S. CENSUS DATA

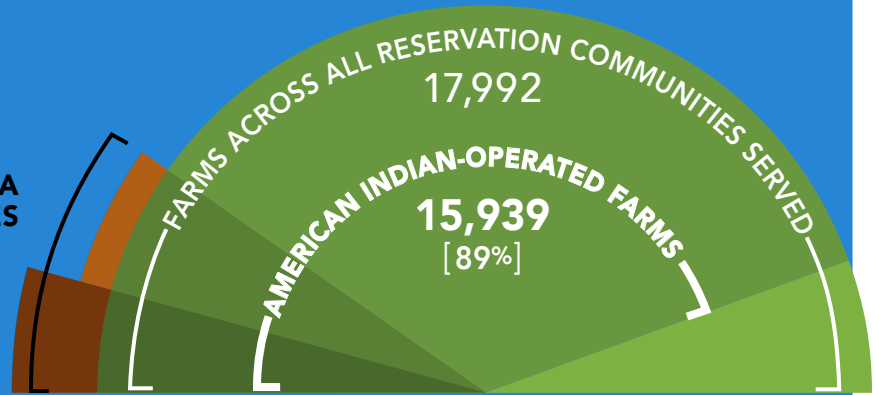
- Communities served have a median household income of \$36,252³ compared to the national median income of \$53,657.
- Of the communities served, 23.91%³ of families live in poverty compared to the national average of roughly 15 percent.

² Economic Research Service (ERS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Food Access Research Atlas, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/>
³ 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/tribal/>.

FARMS BY NUMBER

**EXCLUDING FARMS in ARIZONA
NAVAJO COMMUNITIES**
3,536

AMERICAN INDIAN-OPERATED FARMS
1,577 | [45%]



USDA Census of Agriculture data⁴ tell us that the reservation communities served under this initiative (and which reported to the Census) have a total of 17,992 farms, with 15,939 being run by an American Indian operator (or 89% of all farms). But if we exclude the Navajo communities supported under this initiative, the other reservation communities served have a total of 1,577 American Indian-operated farms, totaling just 45% of all farms within their communities.

These data are interesting in that they demonstrate how the agricultural landscape is very diverse across Indian Country. Moreover they demonstrate that when we look at agricultural assets in Native communities, the data are very community specific, as one community can be an outlier and drastically alter trends.

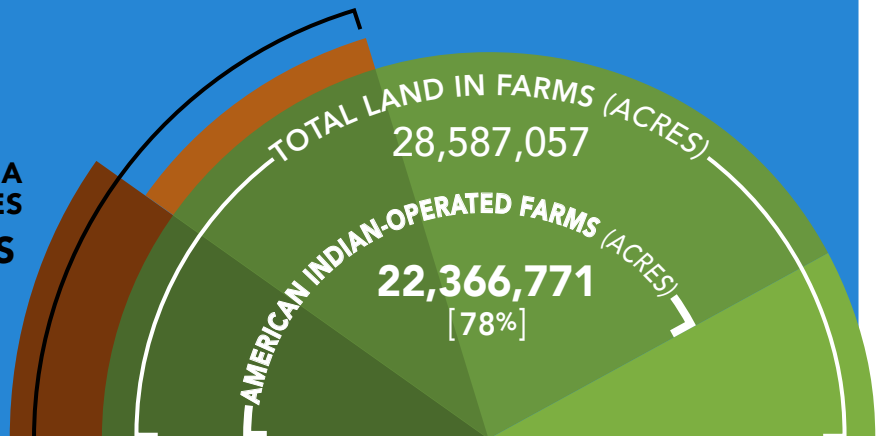
This is the case with the inclusion and exclusion of Navajo farm data.⁵ USDA Census data highlight that Navajo has a lot of American Indian farm operators who responded to the USDA American Indian Agriculture Census (over 14,000). In other words, not many farms on Navajo are operated by non-Indian people in Navajo communities (only 2,053 in communities we included in this data).

Given the high number of American Indian operators on Navajo, if we exclude Navajo, the other communities served under this initiative have a total of 3,536 farms with a total of 1,557 farms operated by an American Indian operator. Put differently, in all non-Navajo communities served under this initiative, roughly 45% of the farms in those communities are operated by American Indians whereas 55% of farms are operated by non-Indian operators.

FARMS BY ACRE

**EXCLUDING FARMS in ARIZONA
NAVAJO COMMUNITIES**
11,615,068 ACRES

AMERICAN INDIAN-OPERATED FARMS
5,504,757 ACRES | [47%]



Similarly, when looking at acres of land in farms in reservation communities we see some sharp differences. Over 28 million acres of farmland is being farmed across the communities served, and 78% of that land is under a farm operated by an American Indian (over 22 million acres). But again, if we exclude the Navajo communities, we see a different picture of agricultural land in communities served under this grant. Again excluding the Navajo communities, there are over 11 million acres of reservation land being used by farms, with only 47% of that land under a farm operated by an American Indian (about 5.5 million acres operated by an American Indian).

Within all reservation communities served, USDA Agricultural Census data also noted that 96% of all American Indian farms are owned by an individual or family (sole proprietorship) and 48% of these farms are owned by women (52% by men) and farming is a primary full-time job for 68% of the operators, whereas 32% of farm operators have other employment.

What these data note is that large national datasets can tell us very little about specific communities. No doubt they help provide information on general trends, but they sacrifice local context for a lens of aggregation and generalizability. When utilizing national data, Native communities should always ask themselves if and how they see themselves in these national data and look to unpack data to look at trends locally.

⁴ National Agricultural Statistics Service. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2012 Census of Agriculture; American Indian Reservations, www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/American_Indian_Reservations/AMINDIAN.pdf

⁵ Since the community partner we supported on Navajo was primarily working in Arizona, we only included data for Navajo land and counties in Arizona (not New Mexico and Utah).

More about our community partners

Leveraged funds

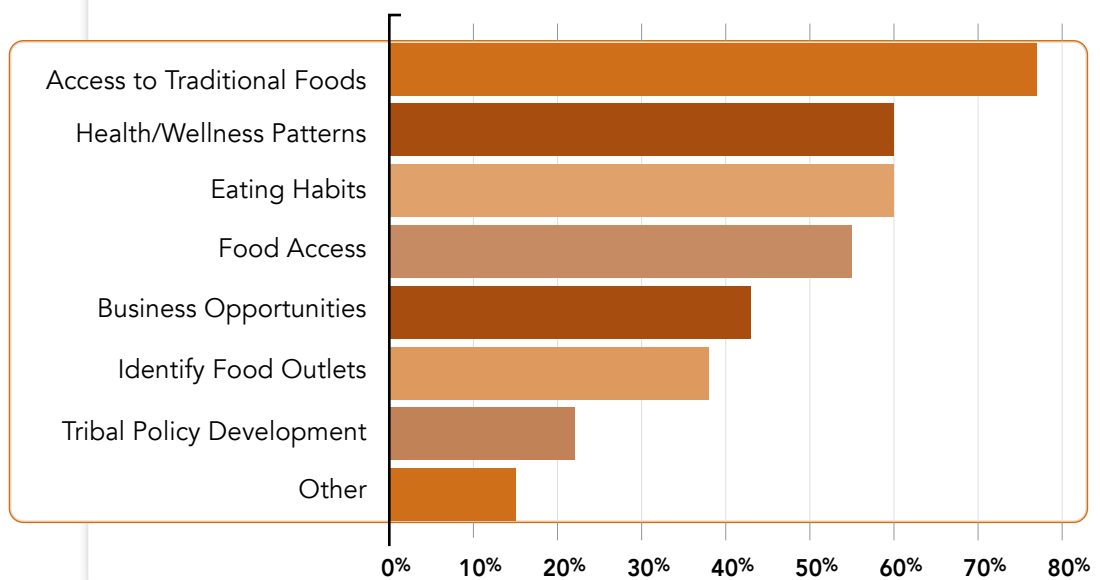
A total of \$885,769 in additional funds were leveraged by the 39 community partners from various sources. That means that for every First Nations grant dollar received, an additional \$1.38 was leveraged by community partners to conduct their food sovereignty assessment.

Why do communities conduct a community food assessment?

Reasons for a community to conduct a food sovereignty assessment are diverse. Most communities cited not just one reason, but multiple reasons for wanting to conduct a food assessment. What this suggests is that there is not significant local data on the local food system and different streams of curiosity motivated the desire for a local food assessment.

TOP REASONS COMMUNITY PARTNERS CONDUCTED A FOOD ASSESSMENT

We conducted a food sovereignty assessment to better understand (could select more than one reason)



Most community partners were examining access to traditional foods. The other top motives for conducting a food assessment cited by community partners included wanting to understand health and wellness patterns, wanting to understand eating habits of individuals, and wanting to understand food access locally. Another commonly cited motivation was the desire to better understand business opportunities and identify outlets locally. Finally, roughly 22% of community partners cited tribal policy development as a primary or secondary motive for conducting the food assessment.





How did community partners gather data?

Most community partners used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather community data for their food assessment. Three-fourths of community partners did utilize a survey for data collection, but there were a variety of ways communities deployed these surveys, including at community events, during focus group meetings, door-to-door and using online methods. Moreover, many communities used multiple methods to get their survey out into the public domain.

Each of the 39 community partners used a minimum combination of two methods and up to a maximum combination of five methods. Participant survey outreach methods included electronic or online surveys (e.g. Survey Monkey), interviewing or one-on-one interviews, handing them out at focus group conversations, handing them out at community meetings, in-person or face-to-face, community events and social gatherings (e.g. farmers' market, powwow celebrations), door-to-door, telephone, and U.S. mail. The participant outreach methods are broken down as follows:



"Surveys only tell so much. The best way to learn about community needs is to speak to them directly and develop meaningful relationships. Invite them to feasts, planning sessions, committee meetings, etc. In my own experience, the roundtable discussions we've held have been the most valuable thing we've done to collect community visions for the future of food and health."

*~ Food Sovereignty Assessment
Community Partner*

SURVEY OUTREACH METHOD	NUMBER of COMMUNITIES UTILIZING METHOD
One-on-One/Face-to-Face Interviews	30
Electronic or Online Survey Delivery	21
Handing Them Out at Focus Group Conversations	12
Community Meetings	9
Handing Them Out at Community Events & Social Gatherings	8
U.S. Mail	7
Door-to-Door Delivery and Collection	6
Telephone	4

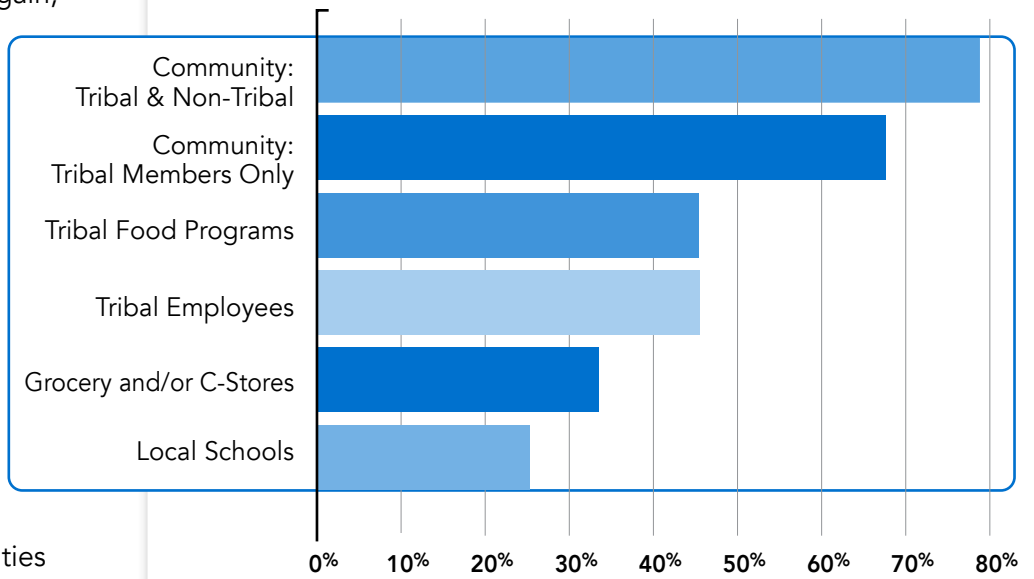
When we asked community partners to reflect on the most effective survey method, most noted that survey deployment at community events, during focus groups and door-to-door surveys were the most effective ways to ensure responsiveness. This suggests that more personal interactions within communities yield the most benefit in survey response rate (as opposed to things like direct mail or telephone surveys that some communities attempted).

Finally, to gather qualitative data, most community partners conducted either stand-alone focus groups, talking circles or interviews at community events, or individual conversations with community members while conducting door-to-door surveys. Most communities were highly satisfied with the effectiveness of these qualitative data-gathering methods, as they felt it helped them gain more nuance about their community.

Main sources of data

One of the most important parts of a community food assessment is identifying sources of data. Again, a majority of community members collected data through multiple sources. Most collected data from individuals (mostly through surveys) and included both tribal and non-tribal members. Many communities also collected data from tribal food programs, retail outlets and local schools. While individuals were the most common source of data (either through survey, interview or focus group participation), many communities did expand sources of data, looking at other environmental factors including businesses and schools.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN SOURCES of DATA for COMMUNITY PARTNERS?



Half of the communities did consult or utilize public federal, state and/or tribal datasets to inform their process. For some communities, these data provided a baseline of comparison (or a method to ensure their data was representative of the community). Other communities noted they wanted to move beyond what mainstream datasets were telling them about their community and dig deeper to understand more about their local food system (be it about traditional foods or food preparation, elder knowledge, etc.).



Partnerships formed to conduct a food assessment

Though not a requirement to receive support, each community did have multiple partners in conducting their food assessment. On average, each community partner collaborated with or engaged at least five different tribal departments for data collection or outreach. Moreover, three-fourths of the communities supported collaborated with other nonprofit organizations in their community. This included direct service organizations, educational institutions and other food-related nonprofits.

Surprisingly, only about half of the communities supported engaged local producers as part of their food assessment. This could be because communities may not know how to conduct outreach to Native farmers and ranchers or may not know who they are. But it is clear that there needs to be more interaction and inclusion of Native farmers and ranchers within food sovereignty assessments.

“We designed a dynamic meeting with interactive activities, including asking participants to answer the questions ‘Why are you here today?’ and ‘What do you think of when you hear Nisqually Food Sovereignty?’ on sticky notes, which they placed on poster paper, and we read aloud to start the meeting. This gave us insight into the ideas about food sovereignty held by the tribal leaders assembled. We also asked participants to pick a commonly eaten food, and track the steps it takes to get to the table. This led into a discussion about what parts of the food supply chains are controlled by the tribe, and what parts the tribe could regain control of. Next, leaders shared their perspectives, at length, about the many resources and barriers related to food sovereignty in Nisqually and generated ideas about how to strengthen these resources and overcome barriers.”

~ Nisqually Indian Tribe

What did community partners learn?

A process that allows Native communities to define their own data-collection process and areas of focus for their food assessment led to very unique community-specific outcomes. Since communities vary in their community food sovereignty analysis and planning, this allowed communities to tailor data requirements to their own specific needs. For example, as you can see below, some communities like the Seneca Nation are exploring enterprise development options as they know accessing fresh, affordable healthy foods is a problem. Other communities are still at the stage of analyzing their local food system and understanding the state of food access, local production, and other household factors. Following are a few examples of what communities learned from their food sovereignty assessments.

Chahta Foundation

DURANT, OKLAHOMA

Over eight months, the Chahta Foundation surveyed 3,207 Choctaw tribal members and conducted focus groups. With all the data, the foundation developed a strategic community plan targeting short- and long-term benchmarks to increase access to fresh and healthy foods for community members.

WHAT THEY LEARNED...

- The majority of people travel up to 10 miles to shop for groceries at the grocery store.
- Aside from the grocery store, the second biggest supplier of food was the Choctaw Nation Food Distribution (FDPIR) program.
- Over 65% of respondents noted that the first thing respondents look for when shopping is price (not nutritional content, freshness or other factors).



- 46% of respondents cited cost and access to fresh and healthy foods as the largest barrier to eating healthy.
- 22% of respondents noted that there are foods which they cannot afford or do not have access to, including seasonal undamaged, fresh, and affordable fruits and vegetables; affordable organic foods; affordable fresh fish; affordable and quality lean meats; and gluten-free foods.
- Nearly 40% of respondent's participate in some form of feeding program including Choctaw Nation Food Distribution (FDPIR) program; free or reduced school lunch program and others.
- 26% of respondents noted requiring food assistance in the past three months, 9 percent reporting they needed assistance for five or more days.

Nisqually Indian Tribe

OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON

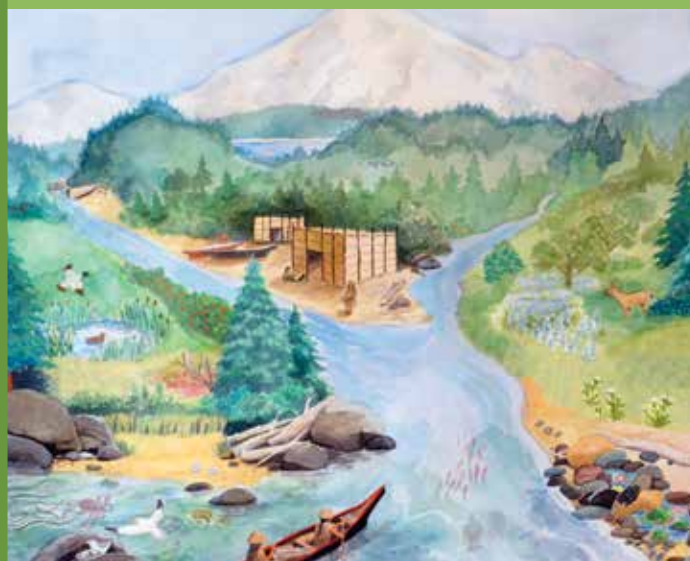
In September 2016, the Nisqually Indian Tribe received support to conduct a food sovereignty assessment. This assessment took a year to complete and involved taking stock of the resources of the Nisqually Tribe's food system.

"We talked to many people and heard stories about loading the family into the car and heading to Mount Rainier to harvest huckleberries each Fall. We heard stories from Elders about when they were children, heading out with parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts, and uncles to harvest clams. We talked to hunters about harvesting elk and processing everything by hand to put up in the freezer and last through the year. We talked to fishermen and fisherwomen about the cultural importance of the salmon runs. The thread linking all these stories was family and connection to the seasons, the water, and the earth. Many of these stories were also about the past. Almost everyone we talked to said that the collective harvest, preparation, and sharing of traditional foods has decreased dramatically in recent decades. There are many reasons for this, which we explore... People also shared a lot of optimism and excitement for the future, and had many ideas about how to reclaim food traditions and get more people – especially youth – involved."

~ Food Sovereignty Assessment Community Partner

WHAT THEY LEARNED...

- Respondents reported being most concerned with the freshness and cost of their food, as compared to its nutritional value.
- A high percentage (78%) of respondents did express concerns about harmful content in foods including hormones (76%) and GMOs (71%).
- Most individuals surveyed did not participate in hunting, fishing, gardening, gathering traditional plants, or preserving cultural foods. But there was huge interest in learning about how to do these things. For example, 37% of people would like to learn how to hunt, 38% would like to learn how to fish, 59% would like to learn how to garden and 60% would like to learn how to gather traditional plants and preserve cultural foods.
- There are many reasons people are not eating traditional foods, but generally the largest barriers are a lack of knowledge and a lack of access.
- They also conducted an assessment of local food providers, identifying and documenting local fish assets, garden assets, shellfish farm and local retail/dining outlets in their community.



Nebraska Indian Community College

MACY, NEBRASKA

The Nebraska Indian Community College and other partners, including the Omaha Nation Food System Initiative (ONFSI), conducted a food sovereignty assessment of the Omaha Reservation. They conducted interviews and surveys about the current state of the food system in an effort to build a community-wide understanding of the impacts of this food system on the community. The data collected from the ONFSI revealed several key findings:

Based on these findings, recommendations were developed to increase local food-system control. This included efforts to develop programmatic initiatives to address lack of access to healthy, fresh and affordable foods on the reservation, and develop initiatives that focus on incorporating traditional foods and agricultural practices. Key recommendations include:

WHAT THEY LEARNED...

- People living on the reservation lack access to healthy, affordable, and culturally-appropriate foods.
- Many residents are reliant on food assistance programs, such as SNAP and WIC, to meet their basic food needs.
- There is overwhelming interest in revitalizing traditional Omaha foods and agriculture.

- Educating the community about healthy, traditional foods and offering these items at food access points that already exist on the reservation.
- Creating additional access points to traditional foods, such as mobile grocery stores or “veggie vans,” Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farmers’ markets, food hubs, seed banks.
- Instituting or working to effectuate policy changes related to the food system on the reservation, such as creating a plan to develop and support farm-to-institution sourcing and local food entrepreneurs, and/or bringing about land use policy reform to allow portions of tribal land to be used to provide for the food needs on the reservation.



Seneca Nation of Indians

IRVING, NEW YORK

The Seneca Nation of Indians conducted a food assessment to explore the feasibility of creating a Healthy Foods Co-op on the Cattaraugus Territory. This assessment will help guide the tribal steering committee in deciding to engage in this new phase of food sovereignty.

“The goal of the Healthy Foods Co-op would be to provide easier access to members of the Cattaraugus Territory and employees of the Seneca Nation to healthy foods, as well as draw people from off territory who live....”

WHAT THEY LEARNED...

[from surveying 626 individuals]

- A majority (83% of tribal members on or within 10 miles of territory; 84% of non-members within 10 miles of the territory) stated they feel healthy eating, including purchasing healthy foods for themselves and their family, is important.
- 96% of members and 91% of non-members would like to eat or serve fresh fruits or vegetables more often if cost and availability were not an issue.
- There was considerable interest in the Healthy Foods Co-op with 89% of the members and 70% of the non-members who live on or within 10 miles of the territory stating they were likely to shop at the Healthy Foods Co-op.
- Food Shopping Difficulties: 60% of the members and 59% of the non-members indicated they encounter difficulties when shopping, with expensive food prices mentioned most frequently by 42% and 39%, respectively.



Seneca Nation of Indians *CONTINUED...*

"... in the vicinity of the co-op. The ultimate goal of the Healthy Foods Co-op would be healthy food sovereignty for the Seneca Nation. While there are gas stations with convenience stores in the area that carry convenient-store types of items, there is little to no availability on territory of items such as meat, grains, bakery items, fruits, vegetables, and prepared meals. The territory has been defined as a food desert with the closest food stores being a Save-A-Lot in Gowanda and Shop 'n Save on the border of N. Collins and Eden. With many people on territory having transportation difficulties, access to these stores is difficult."

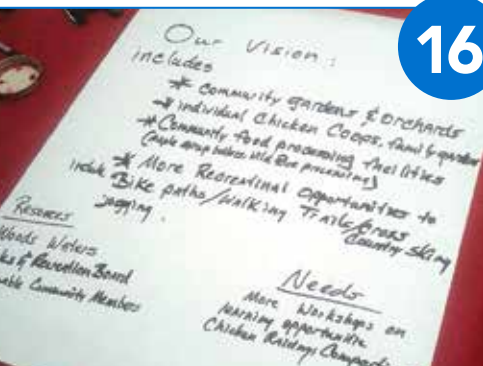
- **Healthy Eating:** Both members and non-members rated healthy eating including the purchase of healthy foods and meals equally important (83% members; 84% non-members).
- An indicator of disparate access to healthy foods between members and non-members was apparent as a lower percent (59%) of members ate fresh fruits and vegetables on a daily basis compared to 73% of non-members. Members also had a lower frequency of eating fresh meat (55%) and grains daily (52%) compared to non-members (70% fresh meat and 64% grains). If cost and availability were not an issue, 96% of the members stated they would like to eat and serve fresh fruits and vegetables to their family more often, and 88% would like to eat and serve fresh meat more often.

How will communities utilize their data?

LOOKING FORWARD

39

community partners collected community-specific data on their local food systems.



16

will utilize their data to create community plans that will improve or expand programs and target increased resources for programmatic support.



"Evidence from our food sovereignty assessment provides overwhelming data that show how important it will be to engage tribal leaders in substantial ways to work toward becoming a food sovereign nation."

~ Food Sovereignty Assessment Community Partner



7

communities will utilize their data to examine enterprise and business development opportunities for their local community.

6

communities will use their data to develop and expand traditional food knowledge and traditional food access.



11

communities will use their data to develop new tools and resources to educate community members about healthy eating, supporting local food producers, local food-system resources and other educational needs.

Moreover, community partners cited other long-term goals for data use, including targeting traditional foods access and preservation locally, engaging tribal leadership to develop policies around food-system control, and developing long-term plans for continual data updates of their community food sovereignty assessments.

FINDINGS & LESSONS LEARNED

Native communities need more resources to support community food sovereignty assessments.

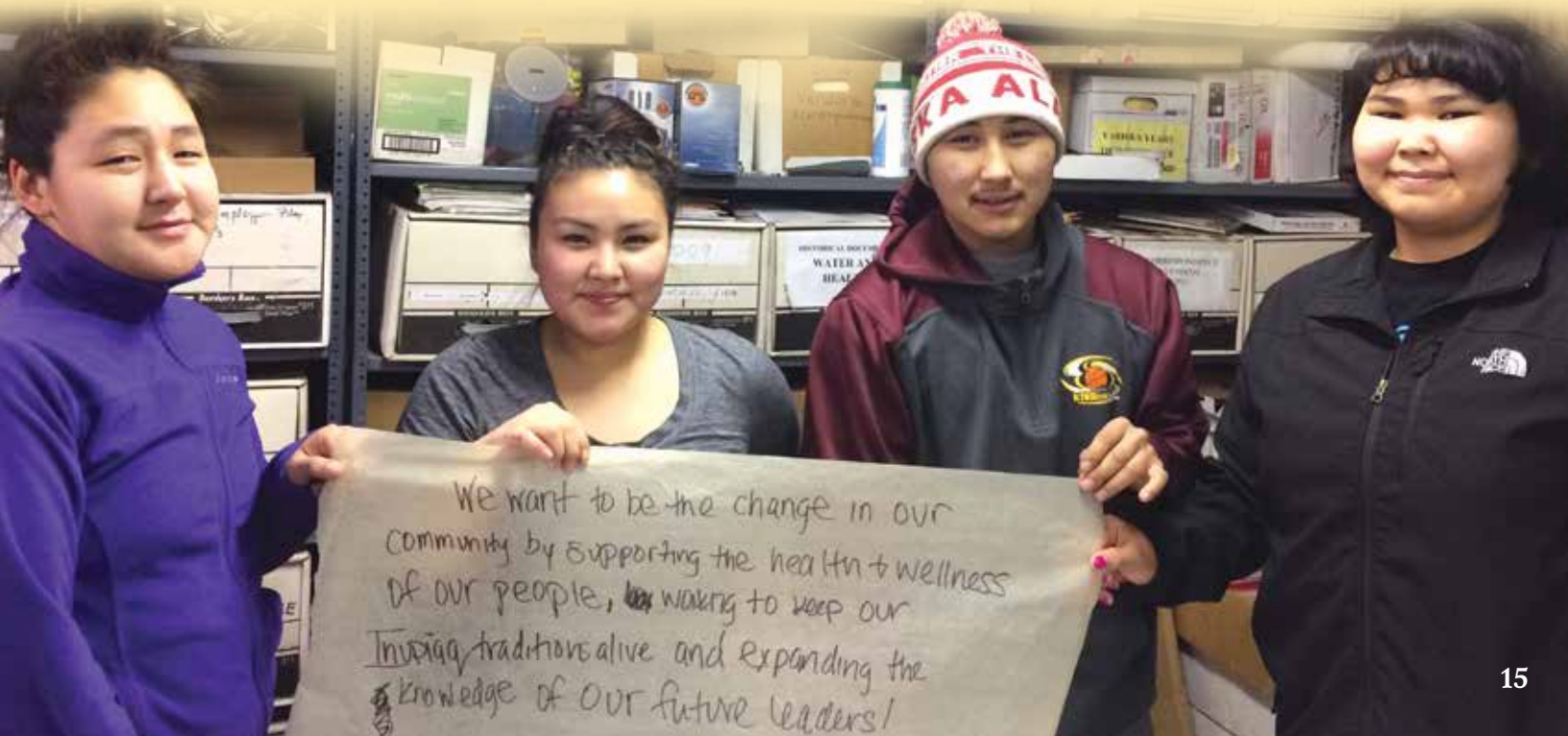
With the generous support of two funders, First Nations was able to provide grant support to 39 communities to conduct food assessments. But more resources are needed to support these data and planning efforts. Most communities used these resources to conduct their very first food assessment and

design data-collection methods and processes that fit their needs and communities. This kind of community-led and driven process in Native communities is rare. Thus, more funds should be directed to these kinds of efforts aimed at community development and empowerment.

Native nonprofits are still among the most active in the Native food sovereignty movement.

First Nations has previously observed that Native nonprofits in Native communities are leading the movement to create healthy communities. Through education, demonstration farms and/or directly growing food products to take to market, Native nonprofits are really looking at different strategies to educate communities, change behaviors and grow local economies. This is not to say tribes are not active on this front. Many tribal

departments and programs have taken an active role in the food sovereignty movement. But in many instances they may lack the resources (funding, staff time, etc.) to fully devote to food sovereignty efforts locally. More investment is needed for both Native nonprofits and tribal government programs and departments to conduct local assessments and develop plans to initiate change.



We want to be the change in our community by supporting the health + wellness of our people, ~~we~~ wanting to keep our traditions alive and expanding the knowledge of our future leaders!

The majority of food sovereignty assessment applicants were conducting their first food assessment.

Three-fourths of the communities that applied for funding were conducting their very first food sovereignty assessment. There needs to be additional support and encouragement for Native communities to conduct food assessments early in their food sovereignty planning process. It not only leads to better outcomes, but it also leads to more engaged and empowered communities to collect and own their data.

About 24 percent of food sovereignty assessment applicants had previously conducted a food assessment. The good news is the average assessment was conducted five years ago, signaling these communities are looking to update their food assessment plans for community planning and continual learning.



Communities can and do leverage small investments.

First Nations was able to provide grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000 for each community. Given the size and scope of projects proposed, many communities had to leverage dollars from other sources or contribute significant sweat equity to complete their food assessment. While we did not capture the amount of volunteer time needed to conduct each assessment, we do know that communities leveraged a total of \$885,769 in additional funds to cover costs associated with conducting their food assessments. That means that for every grant dollar they received, community partners leveraged, on average, an additional \$1.38 to conduct their food sovereignty assessment.

Native communities have a strong desire to look beyond mainstream data and collect their own community-specific data.

The majority of communities supported under this initiative were conducting assessments for the very first time. Almost all communities noted they were conducting an assessment to collect data that wasn't readily available nor reflective of their community through other national or state datasets. Moreover, communities cited multiple reasons for wanting to conduct a food assessment. This highlights: 1) there is not significant local data on Native

food systems and different streams of curiosity motivated the need for a local food assessment, and 2) there is a desire for Native communities to collect their own data that is reflective of their communities.

Data collection is an expensive and time-consuming process and in order to gain a better understanding that is more reflective of the local communities, additional support is required.



Communities are using Indigenous frameworks and methodologies to conduct their food assessments.

All communities that received support used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather local data. Though not required, almost all communities utilized a survey as one method to look at their food system. These surveys were developed by communities themselves, and the majority noted the most important and useful method to develop surveys was through community input and feedback. In other words, community members, as well as tribal leaders and nonprofits, have questions about the food system they want to be answered. When communities can develop their own survey instruments, it allows for questions to be developed that move beyond the deficit-centered questions commonly seen in surveys on food, diet and health (where indicators tend to overwhelmingly focus on respondent weight, poor health and/or bad eating habits). Native communities can ask questions they think are important to their local context and for the purposes of looking toward the future of community health, wellness and overall development.

While most communities utilized a survey, surveys can only tell so much. Communities also used roundtable discussions, one-on-one (including door-to-door) interviews, and talking circles or other kinds of focus groups. Moreover, community partners participated in community events such as feasts, planning meetings or other celebrations for additional outreach and recruitment. Most community partners noted that you have to know your community and the best ways to engage them in the process so their voice is included. This is important because including community not only informs the data but also gives community members a voice and buy-in or ownership of the results.

Know if your community has an institutional review board.

Many community partners noted they did not realize their community required them to go through an institutional review board. All of the communities that needed to go through a review board process passed with flying colors, even though it did cause a slight slowdown in their assessment timelines. Moreover, one community noted that going through the institutional review board process allowed them to make a connection to a previous tribal scholar who was working on food systems-related research. This connection helped them acquire data and knowledge they didn't know about prior to their institutional review board interactions. Generally, if communities are conducting a food sovereignty assessment they should know if their community has an institutional review board and engage that process. All communities noted that they felt the review board process strengthened their projects.



“It is important to ‘know your community’ by seeking out local partners and resources to provide shared access to participants and outreach activities; and sustained activities over time create some awareness so people are more prepared with info and ideas when approached.”

*~ Food Sovereignty Assessment
Community Partner*

Partnerships matter when conducting a food sovereignty assessment.

Communities looking to conduct an assessment should make sure they have mapped the landscape of possible partnerships that can be included in the assessment process. All communities that received funding to conduct a food sovereignty assessment had multiple tribal and nonprofit partners, with an average of more than five communities conducting assessments noting that these partnerships can be leveraged to increase outreach and data collection with the goal of ensuring representative community input to make the assessment process more reflective of the entire community.



We need more tools and resources for communities to utilize when conducting a food assessment.

Communities noted that they would like more technical resources available to help them through their food sovereignty assessment process. Though not a requirement, all communities referenced utilizing First Nations' tools, including the *Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool* and other publications and webinars publicly available. While helpful, communities noted that they needed additional assistance in crafting survey questions that were valid, reliable and reflective of the community.

Communities noted they would like access to learn from other communities engaged in conducting food assessments (past or present). That kind of sharing allows a level playing field — tribal community to tribal community — to learn from one another.

Finally, communities also noted the need for local access to individuals equipped with data skills and knowledge. This kind of technical expertise is needed not only in the data analysis phase of a food assessment but also in talking about how to best conduct reflective community samples.

Communities should engage more with tribal producers in the food assessment process.

When conducting a food sovereignty assessment, there needs to be more engagement and inclusion of tribal producers. Only about half of the communities supported deliberately targeted farmers and ranchers for inclusion. There are many reasons why the communities supported did not include these persons, such as not knowing who they were or having a close connection, not understanding the direct connection between health and the local production, or other reasons. But without the inclusion of Native farmers and ranchers, communities may lose out on critical perspectives about agriculture, local food opportunities and a more holistic approach to thinking of food as it intersects with the economy, health and community development. There is much work to be done to bridge the gap between tribal producers, Native nonprofits and tribal government departments engaged in conducting food assessments.



COMMUNITY PARTNER ADVICE

to Other Communities Conducting a Food Sovereignty Assessment

- **Take time to understand** the community's history and its impact on current norms. It took centuries to colonize our communities and food systems, and it will take time to decolonize those systems. But mapping out how our food system has changed historically can get us to a place where we celebrate our resiliency and embrace traditional foods and traditional food knowledge to build strong and healthy Native communities.
- **Involve** someone (at least in the planning phase) that has a high level of understanding and knowledge of FSAs and local food systems. Overall, ensure you are engaging the right partners in planning and execution.
- **Break your project into phases** to make it more manageable, especially since there will be starts and stops. These starts and stops can lead to a loss of momentum. But timing starts and stops in phases will help ensure that everyone stays engaged throughout the process.
- **Give yourself ample time** to plan/prepare. Planning and preparing is critical to success. This includes planning your process along with specific activities, constituents and other assessment processes. This planning will ensure that you have carefully thought through your assessment and allows you to ensure your process is sufficient to collect necessary data.
- **Take a "team approach."** A food assessment is too much for a sole individual or organization to undertake, so having partners and others involved in the process is critical to making sure a food assessment is successful.
- **Involve the community** as much as possible. This is their food system and these data are for them. Their perspective needs to be included.
- **Identify opportunities to strengthen** food security and sovereignty and use that format and policy around subsistence harvesting. This includes looking at what is working locally, not just what is not working. When we look at what works, we can build on that model for other success.
- **Choose a traditional food to celebrate** during the process and get community actively engaged by focusing on this resource.
- **Market the survey in advance** to increase awareness. It is a good idea to let people know what you are doing in advance to generate community interest. This way, people will know what you are doing and not be surprised when, for example, they get a survey at an event. This is also a way to have others interested in your project to be community champions of your work and volunteer if needed.
- **Use community volunteers** to get honest insight from survey participants. Engage the community in developing your assessment. What questions do they have about the local food system? How can we use our process to answer some of those questions?
- **Strengthen community participation** by attending traditional community events and activities, and partnering with various community groups.

MEET *our* COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association • Anchorage, Alaska | \$20,000

PROJECT: The Aleutian & Pribilof Islands Food Sovereignty Establishment Project:
Restoring the Vitality of Seeds to the Unangan People

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Bad River Band of Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians • Odanah, Wisconsin | \$10,000

PROJECT: Planting the SEEDS Project

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Bii Gii Wiin Community Development Loan Fund • Minneapolis, Minnesota | \$20,000

PROJECT: Traditional Food and Entrepreneurship in an Urban Indian Community

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

California Indian Museum & Cultural Center • Santa Rosa, California | \$20,000

PROJECT: Cuh:uyaw: Increasing Tribal Family Access to Healthy and Traditional Food Resources

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Center for World Indigenous Studies • Olympia, Washington | \$20,000

PROJECT: Muckleshoot Youth Food Planning Council Food Sovereignty Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Chahta Foundation • Durant, Oklahoma | \$10,000

PROJECT: Chahta Illimpa (Food) Assessment Project

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma • Concho, Oklahoma | \$10,400

PROJECT: Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma Food Sovereignty Assessment Project 2017

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Chugach Regional Resources Commission • Anchorage, Alaska | \$15,000

PROJECT: Chugach Regional Resources Commission Traditional Foods Data Analysis & Workshop Proceedings

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Chugach Regional Resources Commission • Anchorage, Alaska | \$19,980

PROJECT: Chugach Regional Resources Commission Traditional Foods Assessment and Workshop

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

FAST Blackfeet • Browning, Montana | \$2,665

PROJECT: Blackfeet Reservation CFSA Dissemination

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Fort Belknap Community Economic Development Corporation • Harlem, Montana | \$20,000

PROJECT: Lodge Pole Community Food Sovereignty Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Ho-Chunk Housing & Community Development Agency • Tomah, Wisconsin | \$20,000

PROJECT: HHCDA Food Sovereignty Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Hunkpati Investments, Inc. • Fort Thompson, South Dakota | \$19,803

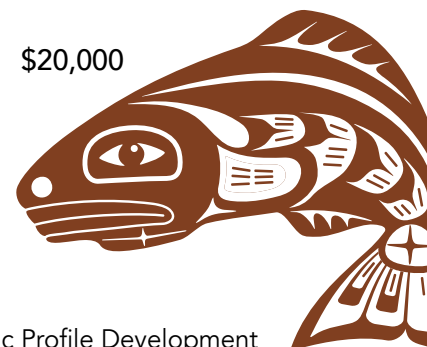
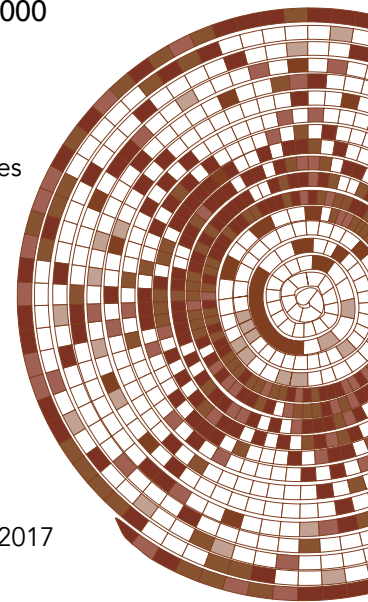
PROJECT: Feeding Ourselves

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Kodiak Area Native Association • Kodiak, Alaska | \$20,000

PROJECT: Kodiak, Alaska Community Food Assessment: Food Supply Chains & Economic Profile Development

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation



Menominee Tribal Clinic • Keshena, Wisconsin | \$10,000

PROJECT: Menominee Food Sharing Focus Group Feasts

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Native Village of Kivalina • Kivalina, Alaska | \$18,400

PROJECT: Food Sovereignty as Climate Resilience, Economic Development, and Youth Empowerment in Kivalina, Alaska

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Nebraska Indian Community College • Macy, Nebraska | \$14,500

PROJECT: Santee Sioux and Omaha Tribal Food Sovereignty Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Nez Perce Tribe • Lapwai, Idaho | \$19,682

PROJECT: Kii Weetes Hiiwes Inim Cilaakt: This Land Is My Body

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Nipmuc Indian Development Corporation • Grafton, Massachusetts | \$10,000

PROJECT: Reclaiming Traditions, Becoming Ourselves - Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Nisqually Indian Tribe Health Services • Olympia, Washington | \$19,595

PROJECT: An Assessment of the Nisqually Indian Tribe Food System

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Ogema Organics • Callaway, Minnesota | \$15,000

PROJECT: Ogema Organics

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma • Pawnee, Oklahoma | \$15,000

PROJECT: Pawnee Nation Local Foods Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Prairie Island Indian Community • Welch, Minnesota | \$10,000

PROJECT: Prairie Island Indian Community Food Sovereignty Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Pueblo of Jemez • Jemez Pueblo, New Mexico | \$14,000

PROJECT: Jemez Community Food Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Pueblo of San Felipe • San Felipe, New Mexico | \$20,000

PROJECT: Food Sovereignty for Pueblo of San Felipe

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Red Willow Center • Taos, New Mexico | \$15,000

PROJECT: Red Willow Community Food Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

REDCO (Rosebud Economic Development Corporation) • Mission, South Dakota | \$20,000

PROJECT: Closing the Circle: Completing a Community Food Assessment and Researching Traditional Lakota Foodways

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe • Hogansburg, New York | \$20,000

PROJECT: Food Sovereignty Assessment Project

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation



Santa Clara Pueblo • Espanola, New Mexico | \$13,500

PROJECT: Food Sovereignty Assessment Initiative

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Saokio Heritage • East Glacier, Montana | \$12,893

PROJECT: Ahwahsiin (The Land/Where We Get Our Food): Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Contemporary Food Sovereignty on the Blackfeet Reservation

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Saokio Heritage • East Glacier Park, Montana | \$20,000

PROJECT: Sokapsksino (To Know Completely): Education on Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Contemporary Food Sovereignty on the Blackfeet Reservation.

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Seneca Nation of Indians • Irving, New York | \$20,000

PROJECT: Healthy Foods Co-op Market Analysis/Feasibility Study

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Sust 'āina ble Molokai • Kaunakakai, Hawaii | \$15,000

PROJECT: Molokai Food Sovereignty Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Swinomish Indian Tribal Community • La Conner, Washington | \$10,000

PROJECT: Swinomish Food Sovereignty Assessment Phase 1

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Tanana Chiefs Conference • Fairbanks, Alaska | \$10,000

PROJECT: TCC Hunting and Fishing Task Force Food Sovereignty Assessment Pilot Project

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The Center Pole • Garryowen, Montana | \$15,000

PROJECT: Crow Community Food Assessment

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Tribal Nations Research Group • Belcourt, North Dakota | \$20,000

PROJECT: Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Food Sovereignty Initiative

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Waimanalo Market Co-op • Waimanalo, Hawaii | \$19,875

PROJECT: Na Kumu Waiwai O Waimānalo (The resources of Waimanalo)

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Walker River Paiute Tribe • Schurz, Nevada | \$20,000

PROJECT: Agai Dicutta Community Food Assessment Project

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: Indigenous People's Fund of Tides Foundation

Yakanal • New Laguna, New Mexico | \$14,700

PROJECT: Yakanal: Putting our Culture back into Agriculture

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

TOTAL FUNDS AWARDED: \$639,993





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