



## American Indian Cancer Foundation, Shakopee tribe, and American Heart Association jointly award \$175,000 in health grants to five Native American organizations

*Fertile Ground Grant Program promotes planning of health and nutrition policy work benefitting Native American communities*

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., March 12, 2018 — The American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF) today announced grant awards totaling \$175,000 in its partnership with the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) and Voices for Healthy Kids, an initiative of the American Heart Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Five \$35,000 grants to Native American organizations will support innovative nutrition- and health-focused advocacy efforts under the partnership's new, competitive [Fertile Ground Grant Program](#).

“Community-driven policy decisions are critical as Native communities seek to improve the health of their people,” said Kris Rhodes, chief executive officer of AICAF. “With the SMSC and American Heart Association’s support, this grant program can empower Native organizations to plan, organize, and build support for Native-led policy change.”

The Fertile Ground grants will provide support for Native-led convenings to identify community health priorities. This funding will also help Native groups develop advocacy and policy strategies that address improving health outcomes; access to healthy food; and food sovereignty rooted in tradition, culture, and Indigenous knowledge.

The five grant recipients include:

- **College of Menominee Nation (Wisconsin):** Host a food summit to prompt changes within the community to enhance food sovereignty and promote healthier lifestyles. This grant will serve the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin.
- **Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment (New Mexico):** Convene intergenerational stakeholders to create a strong coalition of partners to improve Native health through increased access to food and healthy water. This grant will serve the Navajo Nation.
- **Feed Seven Generations (Washington):** Revitalize the health and wellness of tribal communities by amplifying the voice of Native people, reconnecting to ancestral community health practices, and elevating land management strategies. This grant will serve several tribes in the Puget Sound area.
- **4-Directions Development (Minnesota):** Support the community's *Gitigaanike* (Growing Health) initiative, which strives to decrease diet-related health issues, increase access to local healthy foods, and develop a local foods economy for community sustainability. This grant will serve the Red Lake Nation.

- **Na'ah Illahe Fund (Washington):** Develop a long-term vision for normalizing healthy eating and strengthening food sovereignty that is rooted in traditional Indigenous teachings and practices. This grant will serve several tribes in the Pacific Northwest region or Salmon Nation.

The Fertile Ground Grant Program represents a funding collaboration where both the SMSC and Voices for Healthy Kids has contributed \$100,000 to improve Native American nutrition. AICAF serves as the Fertile Ground grant-making intermediary, administering the program and providing technical assistance to grant recipients.

“The dietary health crisis gripping much of Indian Country can be solved in large part at the grassroots level,” said SMSC Chairman Charles R. Vig. “Tribes and Native nonprofits across the country are already making important strides, and we are proud to support these five organizations in efforts that can further lead the way.”

The grant program represents a continued collaboration to address the dietary health crisis in Indian Country. The two entities organized the groundbreaking Fertile Ground conference series, bringing together national funders to discuss Native food access and nutrition in 2015, and Native leaders and activists to share ideas on policy change for improved health and nutrition in 2016.

“Investing in these tribal-led organizations through the Fertile Ground Grant Program will result in long overdue and sustainable progress in community health,” said Nancy Brown, American Heart Association CEO. “Our strong relationship with the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, including this grant program, is an important aspect of our vision of equitable health for Native people.”

###

### **About the American Indian Cancer Foundation**

The American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF) is a national, Native-governed, 501(c)3 nonprofit health organization dedicated to improving access to prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivor support to eliminate the cancer burdens experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native people. AICAF partners with tribal and urban organizations to co-create effective and sustainable cancer solutions that are culturally appropriate. AICAF believes Native communities possess the wisdom to find innovative solutions that are community-centered to address cancer inequities. AICAF provides capacity building through training, technical assistance, and resources to tribal and urban partners to achieve these shared objectives.

### **About the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community**

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community is a federally recognized, sovereign Native American tribe located southwest of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Following a Dakota tradition of generosity, the SMSC is one of the top philanthropists in Minnesota and is the largest

contributor to Native American tribes and causes across the country. It is a strong community partner and a leader in protecting and restoring natural resources. The SMSC's government, Gaming Enterprise, and various other enterprises are collectively the largest employer in Scott County. More information is available at [ShakopeeDakota.org](http://ShakopeeDakota.org).

### **About Seeds of Native Health**

Seeds of Native Health is the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's philanthropic campaign to improve Native American nutrition and food access. Launched in 2015, the \$10 million campaign has provided grants to local communities and funded research, education, and capacity-building efforts. Partners include the American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, Better Way Foundation, First Nations Development Institute, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank, the Notah Begay III Foundation, the University of Arkansas School of Law's Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, and the University of Minnesota. More information is available at [SeedsOfNativeHealth.org](http://SeedsOfNativeHealth.org).

### **About the American Heart Association**

The American Heart Association is devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – the two leading causes of death in the world. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The Dallas-based association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. To learn more or to get involved, call 1-800-AHA-USA1, visit [heart.org](http://heart.org), or call any of our offices around the country. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

### **About Voices for Healthy Kids**

Voices for Healthy Kids is a joint initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Heart Association, making each day healthier for all children. The collaboration is working with communities across the nation to ensure that children have access to healthy food and physical activity where they live, learn, and play. For more information, visit [voicesforhealthykids.org](http://voicesforhealthykids.org).

**For Media Inquiries:** (214) 706-1173

Suzette Harris: [Suzette.Harris@heart.org](mailto:Suzette.Harris@heart.org)

Sara Thatcher: [Sara@goffpublic.com](mailto:Sara@goffpublic.com) or (952) 221-5368

Neely Snyder: [nsnyder@americanindiancancer.org](mailto:nsnyder@americanindiancancer.org) or (612) 314-4848, ext. 841

For Public Inquiries: (800) AHA-USA1 (242-8721)

[heart.org](http://heart.org) and [strokeassociation.org](http://strokeassociation.org)