Partnership in Healthy, Indigenous Foods Policy Change Work: Successes, Challenges and a Framework for Achieving Positive Sustainable Change

Stacy Hammer, RDN, LD
Melanie Plucinski, MPH
Stacy Hammer, RDN, LD

Registered Dietitian, Diabetes Coordinator & Title VI Director at Lower Sioux Health Care Center, Morton, MN

Enrolled member of the Lower Sioux Indian Community

(Mdewakanton Dakota)
Lower Sioux Indian Community

- Federally-recognized Indian tribe located in south central Minnesota, in Redwood County
- The Community Center is located on the southern bluffs of the Minnesota River Valley
- Lower Sioux Health Care Center opened in March, 2016
- Approximately 145 families live on 1,743 acres of tribal land. A total tribal population of 982 resides throughout a 10-mile service area and beyond.
- Governed by a 5 member Tribal Council
Lower Sioux History & Vision

- Members of the Lower Sioux Indian Community are part of the Mdewakanton Band of Dakota. The Dakota, which translates closely to “friend” or “ally” in our language, referred to our traditional Minnesota River Valley homeland as Cansa’yapi (where they marked the trees red)

- The Vision of the Lower Sioux Indian Community is a healthy, safe, and happy community – grounded and guided by Dakota culture, traditions, and language – where every person contributes to a diversified social and economic life. The people grow, adapt, and innovate together, through opportunities that span the generations and seek continuous success.
Melanie L Plucinski, MPH

Policy Program Manager at the American Indian Cancer Foundation

Enrolled member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Technical assistance provider to tribal and urban AI communities

MPH, University of Minnesota, Policy and Administration with Health Disparities Research Concentration
Learning Objectives

- Understand how cross-disciplinary partnership can support comprehensive tribal food systems policy change
- Explain the role of policy, systems and environmental change strategies in American Indian communities in contributing to chronic disease prevention
- Describe how SDPI work can be leveraged to build capacity and support for broader policy and systems change
The AICAF Story

American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF) is a national non-profit established to address tremendous cancer inequities faced by American Indian and Alaska Natives.

Mission:
To eliminate cancer burdens on American Indian families through education and improved access to prevention, early detection, treatment and survivor support.
American Indian Cancer Data

American Indians face alarming inequities in cancer incidence and mortality related to nutrition and other factors.

Cancer death rates for AI/AN increased over a 20 year span, while decreasing for Whites over the same time frame.

Other populations have celebrated decreasing cancer mortality rates in the past 20 years, but American Indian cancer mortality rates are still on the rise.
Our Vision

Our vision is a world where cancer is no longer a leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Natives.

Through hard work, culturally appropriate community-based programs, and policy change that affords Native people access to the best prevention and treatment strategies, we see a day where American Indian communities are free from the burdens of cancer.
We believe…
Native communities have the wisdom to find the solutions to health inequities, but are often seeking the organizational capacity, expert input and resources to do so.
What are some of the leading causes of chronic disease → cancer?

- Federal policy that attempted to eliminate American Indians and eradicate Native culture
- Addictive behaviors associated with historical trauma, including unhealthy food
- Cigarette smoking, chewing tobacco and second-hand smoke exposure
- Lack of regular physical activity
- Alcohol abuse
- Diets high in animal fats and lower in fiber with a lack of fresh fruit and vegetables
Policy, Systems and Environmental Change

• PSE is a framework for creating positive change
• We can relate the PSE concepts to our Indigenous worldview
• Nonlinear, balance, connectedness to living things, respect for life and for each other
• Collective vs. Individualistic
• Thinking of future generations
Relate PSE to American Indian Life Ways

Collective versus Individualistic

- **Policy**: guiding principles for ways of living (respect your elders, never take more than you need)

- **Systems**: building blocks of a community that allow it to function as a whole (family, clan system)

- **Environment**: natural and built world around us (planting gardens, fertilizing the ground)
# Applications of PSE Impacting Lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSE Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td>A human resource departmental policy that requires healthy foods to be served at all meetings, gatherings and events</td>
<td>Decreases in excess morbidity and mortality related to obesity and diet related illness among American Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>System</strong></td>
<td>Traditional tobacco and Indigenous foods community garden spaces with relevant culturally specific education for community members</td>
<td>Increases in prevention of commercial tobacco abuse and decreases in excess morbidity and mortality related to obesity and diet related illness among American Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
<td>Limit sale of junk food products and increase availability of healthy options in tribal stores, building vending machines and cafeterias</td>
<td>Decreases in excess morbidity and mortality related to obesity and diet related illness among American Indians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Real Stories: American Indian Cancer Foundation
Healthy Eating Policy for the American Indian Cancer Foundation

AICAF HEALTH POLICY ON FUNDING, PROMOTIONS, AND PRACTICE OF POSITIVE CANCER PREVENTION VALUES

Statement of values recognizing the primary causes of cancer for American Indian communities are:

1) commercial tobacco use and the exposure to the smoke;
2) obesity; the result of diets that are high in empty calories and low in fruits and vegetables, combined with low levels of physical activity; and
3) excessive use of alcohol.
Healthy Eating Policy for the American Indian Cancer Foundation

AICAF supports healthy eating at the workplace and at AICAF-sponsored community events. AICAF will:

- Choose indigenous and local (when available) food producers, suppliers, vendors
- When contracting with vendors, AICAF requires supplier to provide nutritional options such as fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, lean proteins, and foods low in salt, sugar, and saturated fats.
- Follow the recommended portion sizes, according to current nutritional guidelines.
- Avoid providing sugar-sweetened beverages
- Deny employee reimbursement for the purchase of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Policy template available on website [www.AmericanIndianCancer.org](http://www.AmericanIndianCancer.org)
Tips and Lessons Learned

- Annual educational session highlighting policy components to support staff
- Everyone has a different definition for “healthy”
- Encourage the need to lead by example
- Flexibility for treats in moderation
American Indian Cancer Foundation: Opportunities for Technical Assistance

Policy, System and Environmental Change (PSE)
- Presentations & trainings on PSE
- Facilitated community conversations to identify possible strategies and solutions
- Strategic planning
- Connecting to legal aid for policy, ordinance and resolution drafting
- Provide data and evidence to support change
- Presenting policy and case to Tribal Council
- Coalition building
- Community engagement events, surveys
Formation of Lower Sioux Health and Human Services Advisory Committee (LSHHSAC)

- The Lower Sioux Indian Community, in partnership with the American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF), put together a community Health and Human Services Advisory Committee to serve the areas of Health and Social Services.
- The 8 member Advisory Committee were nominated by Lower Sioux Community member votes at the Community Sioux Chef dinner, held in January, 2015 and approved by Tribal Council.
- The first meeting was held on March 26, 2015
- The long term goal of the committee is to increase community engagement to establish a sustainable Lower Sioux Indian Community food system that improves access to healthy food, connects the community to indigenous foods, and creates healthier families.
Roles and responsibilities of the LSHHSAC

- Providing input towards programming, grant funding use, and community needs by staff in each of these areas.
- Attending one meeting per month, which are co-facilitated with the American Indian Cancer Foundation. AICAF has also been providing education for the advisory committee on health and wellness topics of their interest.
- Providing input on the programming and needs of AICAF. Collaboration between AICAF and committee members have assisted in meeting cancer prevention and educational needs within Indian Country.
The Lower Sioux Health and Human Services Advisory Committee has grown rapidly since 2015. These are their accomplishments.

2015
- Hosted the Sioux Chef Indigenous Foods Demo and Community Meal event
- Held 1st Committee Meeting
- Developed long-term goal and priorities
- Identified committee chair and roles
- Secured funding for Communities Eliminating Tobacco Inequities grant
- Secured funding for NB3: Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures grant
- Published LSHHSAC webpage

2016
- Held Making the Health Choice the Easy Choice Kickoff Event
- Featured in Native Health News Alliance national article
- Secured funding for AETNA-Wikozani, Cultivating Healthy Behaviors grant
- Added Youth Ambassadors to LSHHSAC
- Hosted Community Wellness Dinner
- Enacted Little Crow Healthy Foods Policy
- Held LSHHSAC Strategic Planning Session 1

2017
- Held LSHHSAC Strategic Planning Session 2
- Developed and implemented Strategic Plan

American Indian Cancer Foundation

Lower Sioux Indian Community
LSHHSAC
Accomplishments and Activities

– Committee Chair and Committee Roles Identified October 21st, 2015
– Funding Secured for Communities Eliminating Tobacco Inequities (BCBS)
– Funding for NB3- Community Action Grant
– Kickoff Event -March 2016
– NHNA Article- August 2016
– Funding for Aetna- Wicozani, Cultivating Healthy Behaviors -August 2016
Adoption of Honoring Little Crow with Healthy and Indigenous Foods Resolution

September 20, 2016
LSHHSAC List of Accomplishments

Community Wellness Dinner September 20th, 2016


LSIC Health and Human Services Department Strategic Planning Session I September 29, 2016

Hired 2 Lower Sioux Youth Leaders to sit on committee under the Wicozani program, funded by Aetna October, 2016

Healthy Vending Machines placed December, 2016

Incentives for Vendors at Annual Community Powwow

Strategic Plan to roll out Community Wide Policies

LSHHSAC Strategic Planning Session II January 16, 2017

Presented Strategic Plan Report to Tribal Council on March 27, 2017
Honoring Little Crow with Healthy and Indigenous Foods Initiative Resolution No. 16-116

- Calls for policy to support availability of healthy and indigenous foods in vending machines at rec center and Government Center
  - 75% healthy/indigenous
  - Use pricing and placement to promote healthy items
  - Calorie information to be provided
- Calls for policy to encourage Wacipi vendors to provide healthy and indigenous foods (50% discount on fee)
- Calls on committee to develop strategic plan and recommendations for other food outlets
Vending Machine makeover

- Followed the USDA’s, Smart Snacks, “All foods sold in schools” standards
  - For further information: https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/tn/USDASmartSnacks.pdf
- Multiple conversations and meetings with Bernick’s Representative
  - Very Knowledgeable about Smart Snack guidelines, vendor for many schools in area
  - Very accommodating, and positive about what percentage of snacks and beverages should follow these guidelines
- Working with Tanka Bar company to begin placing their products in Bernicks vending machines
- Soda Pop in Recreation center is only available in 12oz bottles
Strategic Plan Components

A) Guidelines for food and beverages provided at LSIC meetings, forums, and other events occurring on LSIC property
B) Guidelines for the employee dining program
C) Increase availability and purchase of health promoting foods and beverages in stores and other community food outlets
D) Any additional Items
Lower Sioux Health and Human Services Advisory Committee

Honoring Little Crow with Healthy and Indigenous Foods Initiative

Background

The Lower Sioux Health and Human Services Advisory Committee (LSHHAC) is comprised of eight community members and two youth ambassadors. Meetings are organized and supported by four Health and Human Services staff members and the American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF). The committee was formed in early 2015 and held its first meeting in March of 2015. Since then, 17 committee meetings have taken place, along with two strategic planning sessions. This report covers content from Strategic Planning Session II that took place on January 16th, 2017.

The long-term goal of the LSHHAC committee is to increase community engagement to establish a sustainable Lower Sioux Indian Community food system that improves access to healthy food, connects the community to indigenous foods, and creates healthier families.

On September 29th, 2016 the Lower Sioux Tribal Council signed the Honoring Little Crow with Healthy and Indigenous Foods Initiative Resolution No. 16-116, which includes the following:

- Calls for policy to support availability of healthy and indigenous foods in vending machines at recreation center and Government Center
- 75% healthy/indigenous
- Use pricing and placement to promote healthy items
- Calorie information to be provided
- Calls for policy to encourage Vending vendors to provide healthy and indigenous foods (50% discount on fees)
- Calls on committee to develop strategic plan for focus areas A through D outlined in the resolution and recommendations for other food outlets

On January 16th, 2017, nine out of the ten LSHHAC members met to develop recommendations to inform action steps for achieving the four strategic plan focus areas (see below). These recommendations and plan will be presented to the Lower Sioux Tribal Council to be carried out over the next two years.

The committee was tasked to develop recommendations and specific actions to address the following focus areas:

A. Establish and implement healthy and indigenous foods and beverage guidelines for LSIC meetings, forums and events
B. Establish and implement guidelines for selections offered by the ADR (Community’s Associate Dining Room)
C. Establish and implement guidelines for food and beverages for purchase in community retail environments
D. Identify and address any challenges

At the strategic planning session, participants were asked the following question, “What do committee members and the Health and Human Services Department need to do to establish and implement focus areas A through D?” Responses were used to inform the Lower Sioux Foods Policy Strategic Implementation Plan: January, 2017-January, 2018, outlined on page 5-9 of this report.
Visioning: what does health look like for us?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective/Focus Area</th>
<th>Action Steps/Tasks</th>
<th>Who will do this?</th>
<th>Quarter 1</th>
<th>Quarter 2</th>
<th>Quarter 3</th>
<th>Quarter 4</th>
<th>Notes/Additional Resources</th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: Develop set of nutritional guidelines to be applied to all meeting and event planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: Engage decision makers in training on guidelines to apply to food purchasing and menu creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: Conduct an assessment of food for purchase in retail stores, sales, promotions, marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategic Planning Activities

1. Review of Resolution and talking circle

2. Tasked to develop recommendations and actions for strategic plan components

3. Responses generated from one Question
   • What do committee members and the Health and Human Services Department need to do to accomplish establishing and implementing A through D?
Next Steps

- Completed action planning templates for focus areas with committee members
- Worked with AICAF, Julie Aoki, Attorney from Public Health Law Center and key Lower Sioux staff to prepare final report
- Presented final report to committee for review and approval of document
- Presented to Tribal Council on March 27, 2017
LSHHSAC moving forward with HF Initiative

- Committee voted to focus on Component B: Guidelines for the employee dining program
  - Establish and implement guidelines for selections offered by the Associate dining room at Jackpot Junction Casino
  - Action steps needed to begin implementation
The Power of Collaboration and Partnerships

- Working together and communicating with departments within your organization/community
- This policy work could not have been done without the support of the partnerships and collaboration with many groups such as:
  - American Indian Cancer Foundation
  - Notah Begay III Foundation
  - Minnesota Public Health Law Center
  - MDH- Tobacco Prevention and SHIP
  - IHS- Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI)
  - Blue Cross Blue Shield Center for prevention
Engaging and garnering Tribal Leadership support

– Connect and talk with leadership throughout this process.
– Bring the voices of your community to them through survey results, focus groups, etc.
– Engage leadership by conducting a Tribal Leadership Visioning project
  – identified how each of our tribal leaders view the health of our community, what priorities they are focusing on and goals they have set for supporting the health of the people for generations to come.
– Facilitated by AICAF
The biggest thing is listening, we as leaders need to know what members want, so that we can go forward in that direction and guide our work to fulfill the needs of the community.
With increased access to educational resources and increased awareness; community members will be able to make informed decisions to support the health and wellbeing of their families.
Promote healthy initiatives. Identify supportive funding sources. Secure grants and put people in positions who are passionate, energetic, educated and can produce results.
Culturally Tailored Resources for Chronic Disease Prevention
Healthy NATIVE FOODS for American Indian Communities

The HEALTHY NATIVE FOODS TOOLKIT for American Indian communities has been developed to serve as a reference tool to aid in healthy meal planning. The toolkit is designed to provide tips, guidelines, and meal planning strategies for staff meetings and community gatherings for both adults and children. A large part of our culture involves the love of gathering with our friends and relatives around a meal. The destruction of once healthy Native food pathways has led the health of our people to many negative health implications such as, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. The toolkit may serve as not only a guide to provide healthier menu options, but also as a way to reintroduce those healthier foods back into the daily diets of our American Indian relatives and friends.

The overall goal in designing this guide is to support cancer prevention within our communities. Our hope is the healthy Native foods toolkit for American Indian communities will become a valuable resource for you and your organization in contributing to making community and workplace healthy eats more feasible.

Stacy Neveer, RD, LD, Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) Coordinator
Enrolled tribal member of the Lower Sioux Indian Community, Morton, MN

Indigenous Foods for Cancer Prevention

Media Package

August 2016
HEALTHY EATING FOR STRONG NATIVE COMMUNITIES

PROMOTING INDIGENOUS HEALTH

- Indigenous Foods: foods native to local area.
- Healthy Options: water, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, unprocessed foods.
- Unhealthy Options: sugary drinks and processed foods high in sugar, sodium and saturated fat.

- Provide incentives to vendors for offering healthy options and posting nutrition information for all items.
- Encourage bringing healthy dishes to community gatherings.
- Offer healthy options in vending machines.
- Host events featuring Indigenous foods.
- Work with kitchen management to make Elder Nutrition Program meals healthy and tasty.
- Offer culturally appropriate nutritional counseling, including breastfeeding education.
- Initiate fruit and vegetable prescription program with vouchers redeemable at stores and farmers market.
- Apply a Health In All Policies (HiAP)* framework to decision making processes.
- Enact a tribal health and wellness policy.
- Support community health and wellness coalition or committee.
- Enact policy requiring healthy advertising and marketing at checkout area.
- Increase taxes on unhealthy options and decrease taxes on healthy options.
- Initiate farm to school program.
- Enact policy to remove all unhealthy options from vending machines.
- Offer healthy breakfast, lunch and after school snacks.
- Provide education on the role of food in Indigenous culture and medicine.
- Create space for all generations to connect with traditional food knowledge.
- Offer opportunities for skill building in traditional hunting and gathering practices.
- Include Indigenous foods in commodity program.

*HiAP Definition
An approach to tribal policy that weaves the potential health impacts of decisions, seeking to avoid harmful health impacts and improve community health outcomes.

American Indian Cancer Foundation.
Partner and family support:

- Let her know you support her choice to breastfeed
- Be proactive and ask about her needs
- Take care of other baby needs: change diapers, prepare feeding space, hold baby when not nursing, etc.
- Make sure mom is getting plenty of fluids, food and rest
- Cheer her on; it’s not always easy
- Take the lead in daily chores
- Shop and cook for the family
- Care for older children

Where to turn for help:

- Your healthcare provider
- Local WIC program or call the national number at 703-305-2746
- National Breastfeeding Helpline 800-994-6661
- International Lactation Consultant Association - www.lca.org
- La Leche League and their local support group - www.llli.org

Mother’s Milk

Breastfeeding can reduce the risk of cancer and cancer risk factors:

- Breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Hypertension
- Type II diabetes
- Obesity
- Type I diabetes
- Leukemia and other childhood cancers

Feeding baby only breast milk for the first 4-6 months, with continued breastfeeding along with solid foods up to 2 years of life is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Mother’s milk contains cells, hormones, antibodies and cancer-fighting cells that protect babies from illness by improving their immune response.

American Indian Cancer Foundation

AmericanIndianCancer.org
Pidamayaye, Miigwech!

Melanie Plucinski: mplucinski@aicaf.org
www.americanindiancancer.org

Stacy Hammer: stacy.hammer@lowersiouxhealth.com
www.lowersiouxhhs.org