

Emerging Opportunities for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists to Help Raise a Healthier Generation of Native American Youth

Sheila Fleischhacker, PhD, JD



ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article history:

Submitted 23 June 2015
Accepted 22 October 2015
Available online 8 December 2015

Keywords:

American Indians
Alaskan Natives
Food
Nutrition
Health disparities

2212-2672/Published by Elsevier Inc. on behalf of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2015.10.018>

A MERICAN INDIAN CHILDREN ARE EXPERIENCING alarming signs of nutrition-related chronic diseases, such as overweight/obesity, hypertension, and acanthosis nigricans—a skin condition characterized by areas of dark, velvety discoloration in body folds and creases.¹ Children who develop acanthosis nigricans are at higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes. This commentary aims to increase awareness of emerging opportunities for registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) to help raise a healthier generation of American Indian and Alaskan Native children and adolescents (“youth,” for short). RDNs working for, with, or near tribal communities or as educators, preceptors, or mentors who develop the next generation of RDNs have tremendous potential to shape the public health landscape to advance American Indian and Alaskan Native health.

INTEGRATING NUTRITION INTO COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES

Tribal governments, urban Indian organizations, tribal food policy councils, and other community-driven groups are increasingly exploring comprehensive health and wellness policies and plans.²⁻⁷ Several initiatives utilize environmental, policy, and system approaches to promote healthy eating. Other efforts have been in response to First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* in Indian Country call to action, or supported, in part, by a growing list of funding mechanisms specifically designed to foster tribally led community changes, such as the First Nations Development Institute Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative, the Healthy Native North Carolinians Network, the Notah Begay III

Foundation's Native Strong: Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's “A Comprehensive Approach to Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country” (Figure).

RDNs working for, with, or near tribal communities can play an instrumental role in collaborating with tribal leaders to develop, implement, evaluate, sustain, and disseminate comprehensive health and wellness policies and plans that include provisions to promote healthy eating. The National Congress of American Indians Policy Research Center Tribal Public Health Law project is one tool RDNs can use to find resources tailored to tribal governments working to develop their own public health laws; identify existing laws such as tribal child care facilities licensure; and disseminate lessons learned on tribally led healthy eating laws, policies, and resolutions.⁸ RDNs can focus on identifying existing or possible tribal self-governance strategies that emphasize community and economic development, along with food sovereignty—a re-emerging indigenous value ensuring people who produce, distribute, and consume food have the right to determine their food production and distribution mechanisms and policies.^{3,9-11}

In addition, RDNs have the expertise needed to identify tribally led strategies sensitive to the fact that many tribal communities must address the co-existence of food insecurity and obesity among their American Indian and Alaskan Native youth and families.¹² RDNs' ability to work at both the prevention and treatment stages of nutrition-related chronic diseases will be vital, given the high prevalence of chronic conditions and oral health issues among even young children.¹³ Likewise, RDNs can help raise parents' and other key stakeholders' awareness of healthy child feeding and weight-management practices.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ In addition, RDNs can assist with developing cost-effective multi-level, multi-sector approaches that address the social determinants of health, mobilize tribal assets, including family and community ties, and incorporate other tribal priorities, such as suicide and substance abuse prevention. Lastly, at the tribal, state, or national levels, RDNs can help promote the unique authority and needs of tribal leaders and organizations in raising a healthier generation of American Indian and Alaskan Native youth. Too often, health-promotion and disease-prevention efforts call attention to the role of leaders at the federal, state, and local levels, while failing to recognize the authority granted by the US Constitution for tribal leaders to enact changes that can foster healthy eating.¹⁷ When developing curriculum and other

Activity	Description
<p>Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP) Healthy, Active Native Communities (HANC) Mini-Awards https://www.aaip.org/programs/capacity-building-assistance/healthy-active-native-communities-hanc/ Supported by the CDC^a Office of State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Support</p>	<p>Provides online resources, as well as calls for grant proposals from Tribal Health Departments and American Indian and Alaskan Native nongovernmental key players in the public health workforce aiming to adapt and implement the CDC's Winnable Strategies to engage their communities in improving health using environmental, systematic, and/or policy change.</p>
<p>CDC: A Comprehensive Approach to Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/opportunities/instructions/oppCDC-RFA-DP14-1421PPHF14-cfda93.762-cidNCCDPHP-NR-instructions.pdf Financed by the Prevention and Public Health Funding</p>	<p>Building on and growing from lessons learned from a variety of its funding mechanisms and technical assistance supporting work in tribal communities, this funding mechanism supports 22 new grants providing tribes and villages with support to work on strategies including improving access to healthy foods.</p>
<p>First Nations Development Institute Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative http://www.firstnations.org/programs/foods-health Partners and funding sources include AARP Foundation, The Christensen Fund, CHS Foundation, US Department of Agriculture Office of Advocacy and Outreach, US Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Walmart Foundation, and W. K. Kellogg Foundation</p>	<p>Through a variety of past and current projects, First Nations Development Institute has focused on improving access to healthy foods among Native American children and families, including grant making and trainings.</p>
<p>Healthy Native North Carolinians Network (HNNC) http://americanindianhealthyeating.unc.edu/healthy-native-north-carolinians-2/ Funding sources include Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, Healthy Eating Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health</p>	<p>Expanding from partnerships formed during the American Indian Healthy Eating Project started in 2008. Continues to grow and work collaboratively to facilitate sustainable community changes around active living and healthy eating within American Indian tribes and urban Indian organizations in North Carolina. Healthy eating strategies used include: community gardens, farmers' markets, healthier concession stand offerings, and various nutrition-related educational and promotional activities including tribal cookbooks.</p>
<p><i>Let's Move!</i> in Indian Country http://lmic.ihs.gov/ Federal partners include the White House, Executive Office of the President, US Department of Health and Human Services, US Department of Interior, US Department of Education, Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps, and US Department of Agriculture</p>	<p>Recognizes the unique needs and potential of tribal governments and urban Indian organizations to address obesity among American Indian and Alaskan Native youth. Various <i>Let's Move!</i> in Indian Country partners offer relevant grant-making opportunities, resources, and technical assistance. Tribal communities can also leverage resources and tools from other <i>Let's Move!</i> sub-initiatives working on improving access to healthier foods, such as <i>Let's Move!</i> Salad Bars to Schools.</p>
<p>MoGro Mobile Grocery http://www.mogro.net/ Partners and funding sources include the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health, Notah Begay III Foundation, La Montanita Co-op, W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Newman's Own Foundation, and US Department of Agriculture</p>	<p>Using a temperature-controlled truck, MoGro provides healthy, affordable food to Pueblo communities lacking access due to remote location, transportation, and/or cost.</p>

(continued on next page)

Figure. Selected activities to improve access to locally grown, affordable foods and beverages in American Indian and Alaskan Native communities.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5869389>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5869389>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)