

# Partnership With Native Americans Co-Chairs 'Tribal Food Sovereignty' Series with Local First Arizona and Arizona Food Systems Network



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**Partnership With Native Americans →**

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PHOENIX, June 8, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Partnership With Native Americans (PWNA) is collaborating on a new 'Tribal Food Sovereignty' series to open lines of communication across Tribal, regional and local initiatives impacting Arizona food systems and food sovereignty work, challenges and opportunities. Meetings will be co-chaired by representatives of Local First Arizona and Arizona Food Systems Network, along with Rafael Tapia Jr., vice president of programs for PWNA and a long-time advocate for Native food sovereignty.

The inaugural series kicked off on May 27 and speakers included Denisa Livingston of the Dine Community Advocacy Alliance and Slow Food International, and Tyrone Thompson of Chi'shie Farms on the Navajo Nation.

Thompson presented his project to install 100 hoop houses and train Tribal citizens to grow produce and



create a food exchange market across various chapters of the Navajo Nation. Thompson's goal is to build the hoop houses with minimal outside help. Livingston stressed that food systems work needs to be shaped around bio regions rather than state or

23% of Native American families face food insecurity and this summer, Partnership With Native Americans is teaming up with Local First Arizona and Arizona Food Systems Network to co-chair a series of Tribal Food Sovereignty discussions to hear from food practitioners from reservations across Arizona and discuss ways to improve food access for reservation communities.

jurisdictional lines, such as the policies and practices currently used by the Hopi and Navajo to foster food access through bio regions and traditional knowledge.

"Food insecurity disproportionately impacts Native American children, Elders and families, who are often left to choose between food and other essentials," said Tapia Jr. "Our hope through this new series of meetings is to come together and, with the support of Local First Arizona and Arizona Food Systems Network, find viable solutions to preserve traditional food systems, support nutrition education and increase Native food access."

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, 23% of Native American families were facing food insecurity. Tribal communities face higher rates of impoverishment and the lack of healthy food perpetuates a dangerous cycle of health inequity. As a result, Native Americans are at higher risk of nutrition-related diseases, such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

"Healthy, local foods are a catalyst for major improvements in health and economic opportunities in tribal communities. And we need to work together and stand behind the indigenous leadership already achieving so much in this space," said Samantha Zah, Local First Arizona rural program manager for food and sustainability. "With these calls, we're hoping to share their work with our state-wide community and build stronger bridges across skills, expertise and resources."

PWNA works year-round to stock its distribution centers in the Southwest and Northern Plains and deliver food and water to Tribal partners serving community members in need. And while immediate relief is critical, PWNA also offers resources and training for healthy cooking, food preservation,

community garden development and other capacity building initiatives that boost Native food access.

Bi-weekly through September, the 'Tribal Food Sovereignty' series will convene Tribal food practitioners, reservation community members and other grassroots advocates to uncover solutions for accelerating food sovereignty and improving food access in Arizona's Tribal communities. Interested practitioners may register for notifications of upcoming calls at [www.AZFSN.org](http://www.AZFSN.org).

**About Partnership With Native Americans** PWNA is a nonprofit committed to championing hope for a brighter future for Native Americans living on remote, geographically-isolated and impoverished reservations. Established in 1990, PWNA collaborates with Tribal programs to serve immediate needs and support long-term solutions for strong, self-sufficient Native American communities, improving the lives of 250,000 Native Americans annually. Follow PWNA on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, or visit [www.nativepartnership.org](http://www.nativepartnership.org).

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