

HEALTHY NATIVE FOOD PROJECT

FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS

ABOUT THE HEALTHY NATIVE FOOD PROJECT

The Healthy Native Food Project was a two-year project funded by the National Walmart Foundation. The project focused on Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), a USDA income-based food resource for Native people across the nation. FDPIR orders and stocks USDA-approved foods. Some of these healthy and fresh options are traditional foods.

According to FDPIR Director interviews at the start of the project, community needs included:



Cooking confidence



Nutrition knowledge

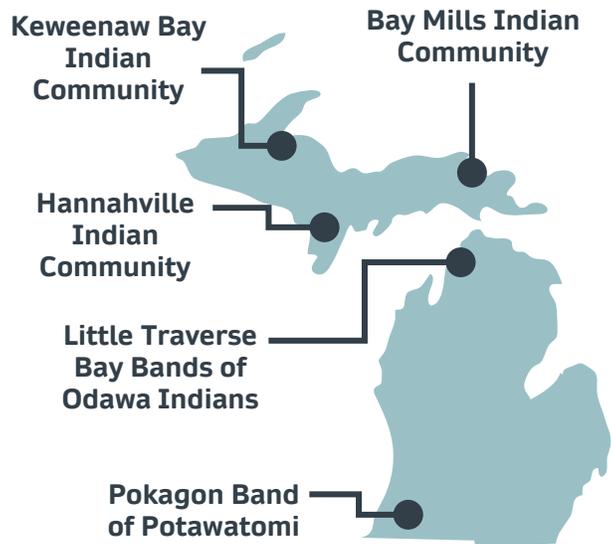


Strategies to address food perishability



Healthy recipes which include FDPIR foods

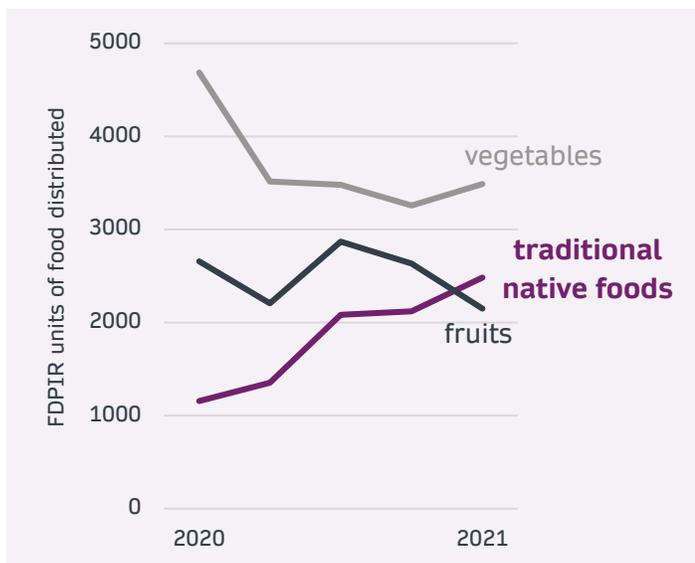
PARTICIPATING TRIBES



Tribes were awarded \$22,000 per year for each of the two years for staffing and supplies and collaborated with Michigan Tribal Food Access (funded by the MI Health Endowment Fund).

To address these community needs, the program offered in-person cooking classes and nutrition education activities to supplement FDPIR.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic halted these in-person activities and increased eligibility for other existing and supplemental food benefits such as SNAP and WIC, which in turn decreased eligibility for FDPIR. The lower participation in the project led to decreased distribution of units of food. The interesting exception is that **units of traditional native foods increased from 2020 to 2021**.



WHAT WAS THE NEED FOR HEALTHY FOODS?

At the start of the project, FDPIR Participant Surveys were collected. We learned:



Most FDPIR participants liked fresh fruit and fresh vegetables a lot!



However, many participants were not getting the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

Nutritional Guidelines recommend that adults eat at least 1½ to 2 cups of fruit and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables per day.

The project responded to these challenges with a community-based approach and guidance from each tribe. Adaptations included...



ADAPTATIONS TO THE PROJECT



In-person cooking demonstrations and outreach were adapted to social media.

Video recordings of cooking demonstrations were created as virtual teaching methods. Cooking class participants received meal kits with ingredients to complete the recipe and instructions to follow along on Facebook Live or with a recording later.



Staff created recipes and hosted cooking demonstrations using healthy food choices available in the FDPIR.

Out of these demonstrations, a new resource was developed for the community: the Anishinaabek Cooking Resources (ACR).

A packet of resources was sent monthly to participants. Packets included recipes featuring healthy ingredients found at FDPIR or local grocery stores (these ingredients were bolded on the recipe cards). Recorded cooking demonstration videos of each recipe included nutrition information and the cultural significance of the featured food.

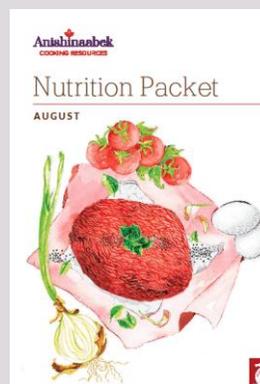
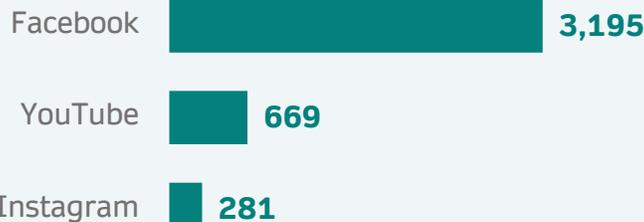


Resources were shared in a variety of ways. The monthly cooking packet and recipe videos were shared on the newly created ACR website, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, USDA FDPIR Resource page, and emailed out to tribes to be distributed online and at events.



SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Facebook received the most engagement/views across all the cooking videos and recipes shared.



ACR packet



Recipe card in ACR packet

One cooking video was released each month in alignment with the 13 Moons nutrition curriculum.

LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE PROJECT

Despite obstacles, adaptations to the project's activities highlighted above seemed to provide an easy and accessible way for tribal members to access the activities, increasing the reach and participation across the tribes. Lessons learned include:



Facebook had the most engagement.



Traditional native foods had strong interest.



Facebook Live cooking sessions were promising.



Virtual cooking videos were an easily accessible and sustainable resource for tribal members.

These lessons learned will be applied in future activities and will continue to shape projects to increase access to healthy traditional foods across the tribes.

For more information about the Healthy Native Food Project, please contact:

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