



### Background

Native Americans have always had a sacred relationship with the land and its resources, but modern times tell a different story. Many American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities now face significant food insecurity due to a history of broken treaties, forced relocations, and restrictive legislation that stripped them of their ancestral lands and traditional food systems. This issue is complex, tied to historical injustices and socioeconomic disparities, and many AI/AN individuals rely on government food programs that often lack nutritional value and cultural relevance. Addressing food insecurity in these communities requires understanding their historical context and ongoing challenges.

### Objectives



1. Identify Root Causes



2. Assess Current State



3. Highlight Community-Led Solutions

### Key Info

- AI/AN households experience **food insecurity at a rate of 23.3%**<sup>9</sup>
- 1 in 3** SNAP participants are AI/AN<sup>5</sup>
- 76.7%** of AI/AN people live **more than 1 mile from a supermarket**<sup>8</sup>

### Methods

A comprehensive literature review was performed using PubMed and Google Scholar to find sources with the following characteristics:

- Were peer-reviewed
- Published to an academic database or journal
- Published within the last decade
- Included both qualitative and quantitative data concerning food insecurity



Figure 1: Photo depicting the three agricultural staples of many Indigenous food systems: beans, corn, and squash (also known as “The Three Sisters”)



Figure 2: Clayton Brascoupe, Director of Traditional Native American Farmers Association (TNAFA) holding Hopi corn in Tesuque Pueblo, New Mexico

### Results

Root causes behind the high rate of food insecurity amongst the AI/AN population include:

#### Policy and Legislative Challenges

- Inadequate Funding:** USDA spends \$1.90/day per FDIPIR participant vs. \$4/day per SNAP participant<sup>5</sup>
- Displacement and Land Loss:** Forced removal led to reliance on government-issued food<sup>6</sup>
- Government Dependency:** 37.7% of households rely primarily or solely on FDIPIR for food<sup>10</sup>

#### Social Determinants of Health

- Poverty:** AI/AN individuals are 2.4 times more likely than whites to live at or below the federal poverty line<sup>7, 11</sup>
- Geographic Isolation:** Food Deserts and Transportation Barriers<sup>8</sup>
- Cultural Disruption:** Loss of Traditional Practices<sup>5</sup>

### Recommendations & Next Steps

To address AI/AN food insecurity effectively, we must honor traditions, empower communities, and advocate for equitable policies. This approach respects cultural heritage while tackling economic, geographic, and health barriers. Collaboration among tribal leaders, health professionals, policymakers, and communities is vital for sustainable solutions that ensure nutritious and culturally relevant food access.

### Conclusions

To address the issue of food insecurity in Indian Country, more funding must be allocated to programs and organizations dedicated to getting cultural foods to AI/AN communities that need it the most. By investing in these efforts, we uphold AI/AN sovereignty and resilience, promoting a future where food security is a universal reality.

### References & Acknowledgements



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