

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE &  
FOOD SYSTEMS FUNDERS



**Strengthened Food & Agro-ecological Systems Contributing to Community Health in  
Indian County**

**Moderator**

**Michael Roberts (Tlingit)**, *president, First Nations Development Institute, CO*

**Speakers**

**Samantha H. Antone (Hopi)**, *program manager, Natwani Coalition, The Hopi Foundation, AZ*

**Jeff Metoxen (Oneida)**, *director, Tsyunhehkw<sup>^</sup> Project, Oneida Nation, WI*

**Ventura Lovato (Kewa)**, *program manager for the Intertribal Community Visioning for  
Healthy Foodways Project of Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health, NM*

- Indian Communities exemplify resilience!

4 BCs

- Before Christ
- Before Columbus
- Before Costner
- Before Commodity Cheese

- Basic Stats:

- Indian country lags 20-25 yrs
- Indian health service funded at 60% of need
- Federal gov't spends twice as much on inmate health than on Indians
- 27% below poverty line
- 30% food insecurity
- Twice as likely to contract diabetes than rest of country

**Presentations**

*Notah Begay III Foundation*

- Founded by native professional golfer
- Obesity rates for kids in some cases as high as 60%
- 81% of Native adults are overweight or obese
- Solution: access to healthy/affordable food, advocacy, nutrition education...
  - 360 approach in San Felipe

### *Natwani Coalition / Hopi Foundation*

- Focus on strengthening of Hopi Agriculture; Bridging generations
- Do micro-grants to initiate small projects, developed a farming curriculum
- Community advisors drive program creation
- Hold Biannual symposium – for peer education amongst 12 villages
- Tap into existing cultural infrastructure

### *Joon-hey-qwa (Oneida)*

- Educational facility, open to the public; Cannery, workshops, organic gardens, greenhouses, youth programs
- Focus on gathering information and sharing it in the community

### Discussion

- Holistic Efforts:
  - Incredible diversity within 500+ federally recognized tribes
  - Culture acts as nexus
  - Focus on agriculture, requires additional balance with other engagement points – cooking, for example
  - With small staffs, community investment, with representatives in different communities, is the key to advancing programs
  - Can't feed whole community on 80 acres of demonstration – but we can educate and share learning, supporting others to grow their own
- Community engagement:
  - Food Truck launch – surveys done on what people wanted
  - Could've been more community engagement – fancy truck, lacked brand recognition; price points off base; local native farmers weren't incorporated
  - Recognized problems – and went back to the drawing table
- Intergenerational work
  - Tapping into culture, lifeways not hard. More challenging to convene community gatherings
  - Number 1 value is about passing on teachings to children – elders join programs driven by motivation of passing down knowledge
  - Elders still see youth as uninterested, unmotivated, lazy – so there's a disconnect between generations
  - For Hopi – all villages now exposed to basic food systems education. Now looking at alternatives. Particularly, new focus on GMOs, which is a concern.
- Larger Lessons
  - Importance of networking – connecting local farm to school efforts; figuring out how to get past challenging dynamics in new collaborations and get to action
  - India country is a mystery to so many – focus on what we don't know, distrust, stereotypes. Need to shine a light on existing projects and bring them forward. We have models that are very relevant to other low income communities of color, in the US and globally. Diet related disease is a growing, global problem. Indian country has been dealing with it longer than most

- Outcomes and Impact
  - On Hopi, everyone's talking about this issue, where there was no conversation before
  - New fields are being plowed where they'd been abandoned for years; men farming more; women preparing more Hopi food, because there's more Hopi foods to prepare!
  - Agricultural science curriculum being taken up by Indian public schools
  - Importance of looking at impacts, metrics over longer term. 12 year trends fluctuate, but headed upwards
  - Important to look at quality: 300 seed and plant distribution ...but end up being composted; serve traditional corn soup in high school... but more gets dumped then eaten. Need to ensure usage – so constantly looking at ways to improve
  - Tribal communities – such a small population; we'll always lose at the numbers game; BUT, impact is deep. A small program could impact 75% of the community.
  - History of abuse and disrespect from academic institutions when it comes to gathering (stealing) data on reservations
  - Need to have a multi-stakeholder conversation about how we plan to evaluate, together; Many need technical assistance to develop that systems
- Resources
  - Less than 0.5% of private philanthropy goes to Indian country
  - Foundation support – one pioneering example: Christianson Fund, central to Hopi programs
  - We'd continue even without funding; we've always carried on these traditions, and would even if foundation support dried up
  - Have 'Arizona gives' day – urban Hopi, private donors provide support
  - Strong support from Oneida nation council. Tribal members vote on budget. That's one sign of our success. We're valued.
  - Hopi, meanwhile, doesn't fund the Hopi-based organization
  - Indian health services only gives 1 out of 3 dollars to prevention
  - We pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and we go. We're worth the investment
- More:
  - MoGro mobile market re-engineered with Advisory Board, including community members; now lay leaders are catching on and working as community champions to mobilize their peers. Complex process with so many pieces. Locals seen purely in consumers in first iteration.
  - Question is, what's your tolerance for failure? How quick do you need to see impact? There's never one silver bullet.
  - Question of reservation-based, urban or rural focus?
  - Discussion of importance of historically rooted work – something that could be useful for many non-native communities
  - Question of intersection between technical programs / econ development and social movements / political advocacy.
    - Lots of federal programs that are starting, Indian country is left out unless specifically named in legislation; states and reservations have long-competitive relationship, so we usually stay out.

- Started national Indian food sovereignty alliance – early webinar saw 350 people signed up
- Recent Food Sovereignty conference maxed out with 300 people
- With soda tax effort in Navajo nation – we can barely figure out our political process... so how are Coke/Pepsi gonna mess us up?