



1994s Impacts

PHOTO: USDA

Supporting the health and well-being of Tribal Nations

Tribal colleges and other land-grant universities across the United States are working with Indigenous communities to promote food security, fight disease, support traditions and protect ecosystems.

Successful examples include:

- In **Indiana**, Purdue Extension helped secure a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Economic Development Innovation grant to foster rural development in nine communities in the state. For one of those projects, Purdue Extension collaborated with the School of Nursing, the Center for Community and Environmental Design and the Turtle Mountain Band of the Chippewa in North Dakota to create a detailed plan for a substance use disorder recovery center that is now underway. The center will integrate a 100-acre campus with a new central facility, recovery residences, courses, equine therapy stables, a sweat lodge, a medicinal garden and walking trails for the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians community.
- Produce shortages continue to be an issue in **American Samoa**. Delays in shipping and rising costs of imported vegetables affect the community. To help communities grow their own local produce, the American Samoa Community College Cooperative Extension Service has been conducting trials to identify vegetable varieties that grow well in the territory's soils and climate conditions and have good yields and few pest and disease problems. Strong performers include okra, which grows easily and contains nutritious vitamins, fiber and antioxidants.
- University of **California** Cooperative Extension worked with the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Tribe to advance sustainable health initiatives and foster positive health outcomes among tribe members. University resources and expertise are supporting projects that are engaging youths in the food environment, developing farm-to-school programs and promoting food sovereignty. As a result, the tribe has reinstated a Tribal Youth Council, planted a new vegetable garden and formed a

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Community Wellness Committee. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 1,600 USDA Farmers to Families Produce Boxes were distributed to efforts to 400 tribal families and the surrounding community.

- The black ash tree is an integral part of **Vermont**'s environment and has deep cultural significance for the Abenaki and other Indigenous people who use splints from these trees for basket making, but emerald ash borer insect pests threaten these trees. University of Vermont Extension partnered with the University of Maine, state and federal agencies, and a basket maker from the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation to provide an informational webinar. The webinar has encouraged seed saving, smart harvest and efforts to control emerald ash borer.
- The University of **Georgia** and Navajo Technical University have partnered to recruit three Navajo Fellows to earn doctoral degrees in agricultural disciplines. University of Georgia faculty are guiding the fellows in research related to local and global food security challenges and preparing them for careers in agricultural industries. After earning their doctoral degrees, the fellows will obtain positions as higher education faculty, USDA scientists, Navajo Nation Council members or community leaders, serving as role models for the next generation. This work is supported by a USDA-NIFA National Needs Fellowship grant program.