

DINE' COMMUNITY ADVOCACY ALLIANCE or DCAA Newsletter
“Let's Live a Long Life”



Brief Background

- DCAA formed in March 2012 as a reservation-wide group of volunteers or health promotion specialist.
- DCAA recognized the high rates of obesity, diabetes and related complications among children, youth families and Navajos living on the reservation.
- Members are grassroots level community health advocates to raise awareness, educate, and mobilize community members to combat health issues with healthier lifestyle information.
- After participating in training and meetings, the group decided to seek a tax on “junk food” as legislation with the Navajo Council with revenues

returning to chapters for wellness projects.

DCAA as an Agent with Navajo Council

DCAA researched health disparities causing obesity and diabetes to obtain support resolutions from 48 chapters and five agency councils citing many major issues such as:

- High consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, energy drinks and junk food causes obesity and diabetes;
- According to the Navajo Area Indian Health Service, there are 25,000 Navajos with diabetes and 75,000 that have pre-diabetes;
- Indian Health Service report that annual cost to treat a person with diabetes is \$13,000 and those with related complications is \$100,000;
- The Sweet Success report of 2011 states that 31% of Navajo pregnancies were complicated with diabetes, and 81% of these women have Body Mass Index in the overweight or obese range;
- Obesity and diabetes can be prevented.

DCAA & the Legislative Work

From 2013-2014, DCAA presented to more than 20 standing committees and 6 times to the full Council; in addition to meetings with Navajo President, Vice President, Tax Commission and other officials.

Two Food Taxes-next page...
Healthy Dine Nation Act

Zero Percent Tax on Healthy Foods Effective October 1, 2013

Navajo stores cannot charge any tax on healthy foods as fresh fruits and vegetables; including bottled drinking water, nut butters and nuts effective October 1, 2013. The Navajo Tax Commission Office mailed letters to Navajo stores to notify them about this new tax law. The intent of this law is to encourage Navajos to purchase healthy foods to improve their children's and family's health.

Two Percent Tax on Unhealthy Foods Effective April 1, 2015 (Be reviewed by 2020 with possible extension by the Navajo Council)



The rate of two percent tax will be applied to “minimal-to-no nutritional value food item/s” sold at all “retail business activities” within the Navajo Nation which means stores, cafes, fast food establishments, hotels or any over the counter sales of ‘non-

nutritional value food item/s means sweetened beverages and prepackaged and non-prepackaged snacks stripped of essential nutrients and high in salt, saturated fat, and sugar including sweetened beverages, sweets, chips, and crisps.” These items could include candy, certain syrups, artificial sweeteners, natural fruit or vegetable juices, desserts, pastries, puddings, baked/fried goods, etc.

Two Percent Tax Revenues Return to Chapters for “Wellness Projects”

Division of Community Development is developing “Community Wellness Development Projects” guidelines as instructed in the “HDNA, Fund Management Plan” for chapters to receive these funds, how those funds will be used (e.g., project examples as gardens, farmer markets, clean water, healthy cooking classes, traditional foods, etc.) and how they will be monitored and evaluated. Projects must be designed and implemented by community members.

Bottom Line: HDNA message is better health and not so much the tax revenue money.

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Navajo Nation Food System Movement

Dine' Food Sovereignty Alliance or DFSA is founded on sa'ahaaghei bi'k'ehoozhoon-the Dine' way of life.

DFSA is incorporated as a Navajo non-profit organization in Sept. 2014.

The purpose of DFSA's food sovereignty activities will be:

- Based on Dine' values-h0zho doo K'e';
- Language and culture revitalization;
- Principles of self-determination consistent with Dine' traditional knowledge;
- Conduct research and evaluation- e.g., H0zh00go Na'1da Model;
- Promote partnerships and collaboration;
- Promote culturally-based resource utilization;
- Raise funds for aspiring projects of individuals and groups;
- Act as an information clearinghouse;
- Educate communities, members and the public;
- Advocate for indigenous-centered social justice and social transformation.

The DFSA is governed by 12 Naat'aanii Council Members whom shall advocate and be responsible

for nurturing and protecting DFSA affairs. DFSA members can be individual Dine' or groups organized to pursue food sovereignty initiatives.

Collaboration with organizations and Navajo Programs:

New Mexico Farm to Table:

- Workshops on Food Safety Standards, School Gardens, and Introduce Food Policy Councils.
- Presented at National F2T event & Chicago American Indian Center
- Collaboration plans with NMF2T on food policy development



Community Outreach Patient Empowerment/REACH grant

- Navajo Store Surveys and access local produce into stores by connecting gardeners & farmers
- Develop Dine' evaluation model: "H0zh00go Na'1da on select REACH projects
- Disseminate Navajo Food Policy Toolkit by Harvard Food Law Center with plans for Dine' Food Toolkit
- Mentor and work with Dine' youth
- Happy Home & Traditional Foods
- And more food system projects.

Native American Producers Success Project - goal to enhance the sustainability of Navajo farming and ranching activities:

- Conduct assessments to identify barriers and solutions among Navajo communities.
- Annual Resource Fairs in AZ & NM
- Establish the Navajo Farmers and Ranchers Congress
- Co-sponsorship with the Dine' College Land Grant Office and New Mexico State University (NMSU) Cooperative Extensive Service



Dine' College Land Grant Program and Dine' Policy Institute

- Plan and present at their annual Navajo Food Sovereignty Summit.

Stronger Economies Together-SET-USDA and NMSU Northwest Region Project and other organizations:

- Participates in a series of economic type workshops and developed proposal for tourism, industrial manufacturing, and agriculture topics.

Navajo Area-I.H.S.- workshops in facilitation & hosting meetings.

Black Mesa Water Coalition and Land and Water Conservation Regional Committee

- Provides meetings of chapter officials, BIA, Navajo Ag Dept. and farmers on land & water issues;
- Conducts farm tours and workshops on traditional Dine' farming practices

Sheep Springs Backyard Gardeners Association-10 families

- Assist families with training, tools, fencing, supplies, etc. for gardens
- Organized community garden with drip water system, using youth and elders working together

Capacity Builders, Inc.-Farmington, NM-provide resources and training for Navajo agricultural projects.

- Permaculture I and Eating Weeds Food Demo and Lunch
- Permaculture II & water drip system
- Beekeeping Training & Giving Beehives with supplies
- Traditional Food Demo with nutrition info and physical & medical benefits.

Others:

- New **Navajo Food Access Navigator**, USDA funded project
- Yeego Gardening**-UMSU project
- Navajo Dept. of Ag** workshops
- Ft. Defiance Indian Health Board-REACH grant.

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