

The State Of Food Sovereignty: Stories of Food and Community from the Sicangu Lakota Oyate

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Autumn 2019

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Summary

I. Past Experiences Around Food for the Sicangu Lakota Oyate

- Traditional food practices promote individual and community health and are a way to maintain connections to grandparents and ancestors and promote a continuous community throughout the generations.
- Growing up, the families of Sicangu Elders gardened, foraged, hunted, and produced most of their own food, with traditional wisdom (*woksape*) being shared across generations, exemplifying generosity (*wacantognaka*).
- Boarding schools separated children from their families, breaking this chain of knowledge and kinship. The effects of the boarding school system persist today through historical trauma; in regards to food particularly, the loss of traditional food wisdom has contributed to poor health.

II. Current Food Experience on the Rosebud Reservation

- The reservation houses only 3 grocery stores, 8 convenience stores, and 3 stand-alone prepared foods, concentrated in Mission/Antelope, Rosebud, & St. Francis.
- Key factors inhibiting access to healthy food: transportation, housing, price, education.

III. Food is Medicine: Holistic Health

- You are what you eat: *"...All our people are... fighting each other... it's what we eat. Nowadays we eat chicken, we eat hog, look how they act. We act just like them. A long time ago we used to eat buffalo. That's why we used to be family [with the] buffalo."*
 - Language & cultural values: All living beings are relatives to the Lakota, as all creatures have the same origin, from the "wamakaskan Oyate."
- Prayer is a vital component of Lakota life; it demonstrates respect for the sacrifice of plants and animals to nourish us, and makes traditional medicines more effective.

IV. Signs of Hope: Community Steps Towards a Sovereign

Food System

- Food Sovereignty Initiative: empowering Sicangu families and building relationships through food, growing a new generation of Lakota food producers and entrepreneurs.
 - Methods: educational & cultural programming, community outreach, economic development, & increasing access to healthy, affordable foods.

V. Food for Our Future: Reimagining the Food System of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate

- Community recommendations: grocery store layout changes, junk food tax, food prescription program, increased transparency in the food system, community food societies / cooperatives, youth education
- Creating opportunities for entrepreneurs: increased market access, tribal food code, space to create value-added goods, facilitating connections between producers & retailers

Introduction:

What is Food Sovereignty?

Food sovereignty refers to peoples' right to both consume and produce food that is culturally appropriate, nutritious, and safe, grown in a manner that is sustainable and safeguards the environment for future generations. The concept was introduced by La Via Campesina, a self-described international peasant's movement founded in 1993 that advocates for and coordinates small scale farmer's organizations around the globe. The organization introduced the term at the World Food Summit in 1996, presenting an alternative to neoliberal agricultural policies that prioritize international agricultural trade and industrialized agriculture to the detriment of the health and well-being of small scale producers, indigenous communities, and the planet.¹

Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Native food sovereignty refers to the right of Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, and American Indians to use their own lands to produce their own traditional foods in order to sustain themselves as well as their families and broader communities. Prior to European colonization in the Americas, indigenous Americans practiced food sovereignty for thousands of years. Since colonization, and particularly since the advent of the reservation system, the complex Native food systems that sustained tribes for millennia have been purposefully decimated to the detriment of Native communities, their lands, and the health of Native peoples.²

Food Sovereignty is essential for tribal sovereignty; after all, "You can't say you're sovereign if you can't feed yourself."³ The intentional destruction of Native food systems was a colonization tactic employed by early colonizers on Turtle Island, and later by the U.S. government, in order to control and subjugate tribes across the continent. During the American Revolution, native fields were intentionally burned so that tribes would be unable to replant crops. In 1830, the Indian Removal Act removed Natives from their homelands onto land with infertile soil.⁴ In the second half of the 1800s, the U.S. government hired sharpshooters to hunt bison near to extinction in order to destroy not only the food source but the entire economic system and survival of Plains Indians. Approximately thirty-one million buffalo were killed between 1868 and 1881.⁵ This act of genocide made it possible for the U.S. to expand across the continent as part of its "Manifest Destiny." The destruction of the buffalo and genocide of Plains Indians was both made possible by and undertaken in order to ensure completion of the

¹ <https://viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty/>

² First Nations Development Institute, "Native Food Sovereignty"

³ Elizabeth Hoover (2017) "You Can't Say You're Sovereign if You Can't Feed Yourself": Defining and Enacting Food Sovereignty in American Indian Community Gardening. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*: 2017, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 31-70.

⁴ First Nations Development Institute, "Native Food Sovereignty"

⁵ <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/where-the-buffalo-no-longer-roamed-3067904/>

transcontinental railroad, which was to bring even more settler colonizers to the Plains. Once the railroad was completed, destruction of the buffalo accelerated as thousands of hunters came west to kill for sport. By 1900, only 300 wild buffalo were left.⁶

While the U.S. government severely decimated native food systems, **tribes have begun to fight back to reclaim their traditional foods and heritage.** They've done so through legal means, such as instituting a tribal food code, to protect their traditional knowledge and practices and promote tribal producers.⁷ Tribal initiatives, such as the Sicangu Food Sovereignty Initiative (FSI) on the Rosebud Reservation, are another means tribes have taken to rebuild a sovereign food system. Food sovereignty projects are a way to increase community engagement, cultural knowledge, and economic development through food.

Food Sovereignty and Food Security: What's the Difference?

Food security is defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the ability of all people at all times to access enough food to lead a healthy, active life.⁸ The inability to access enough food is referred to as food insecurity, and impediments to access may be multifaceted and include financial, physical, and geography-based barriers. Individuals and families facing food insecurity are also likely to face other challenges such as lack of affordable or adequate housing, health issues, medical costs, low wages, and social isolation. The inability to meet these basic needs decreases a family's level of food security, and efforts to address food security must also address these other barriers in order to be effective.⁹

Food sovereignty differs from food security in that food security is concerned solely with ensuring access to enough quality food, without concern as to the environmental, economic, and social consequences of that food's production. Food security also ignores the cultural appropriateness of food, and frequently, if not always, leads to the privileging of large-scale corporate agriculture, industrialized agricultural trade, and misguided and inefficient food aid programs over small-scale producers and community decision making in regard to food.

Community influence over a local food system is essential to food sovereignty. As sovereign nations, tribes have the power to exercise their agency to both empower members to produce and harvest their own food as well as build tribal food economies.

⁶ Ibid.

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<https://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/tribes-create-their-own-food-laws-to-stop-usda-from-killing-native-food-economies-20160524>

⁸ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/>

⁹ <https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/understand-food-insecurity/>

Food Sovereignty for the Sicangu Lakota Oyate

Food Sovereignty is a broad concept, and it means different things to different people. According to over 25 community members surveyed at various farmers' markets on the Reservation and at the 2019 Rosebud Fair, food sovereignty means:



Methodology

Economic data for this report was compiled by Ken Meter, President and food systems analyst for the Crossroads Resource Center based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 2016, the Food Sovereignty Initiative (FSI) conducted surveys in all twenty communities on Rosebud, and those responses are also incorporated in the report. Community food assessments were conducted during the summer of 2019 by the FSI to assess past, current, and desired future experiences around food for the Sicangu Lakota Oyate. These community food assessments targeted five sectors of the Rosebud community, reaching a total of 201 community members and thirteen food vendors/producers. FSI outreach methods included:

- Community roundtable discussions with a total of forty-seven community members in five communities: HeDog, Parmelee, Antelope, Rosebud, and Okreek,
- A youth roundtable discussion in Mission, with thirteen FSI summer garden interns,
- One-on-one interviews with nine Sicangu Elders,
- Brief questionnaires conducted at the weekly Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market in Mission, Rosebud Fair, and FSI mobile farmers' markets in St. Francis and Parmelee, reaching a total of 132 respondents, and
- Thirteen interviews with tribal food producers/entrepreneurs and vendors, including supermarkets, convenience stores, Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market vendors, and Boys and Girls Club cooks.

Objective

The objective of this report is to explore the past, present, and future food system of the Sicangu Lakota on the Rosebud Reservation through the lens of the four Lakota values of generosity (*wacantaognaka*), courage (*woohitika*), respect (*wowacintanka*), and wisdom (*woksape*).¹⁰ The report addresses these values through a four-fold approach exploring past experiences around food, the current food system, current work being done in regard to food issues on Rosebud, and the community's ideas for Rosebud's future food system.

This report

The first section identifies past food experiences for the Sicangu Lakota Oyate and how the food system has changed in reaching the current day. This section of the report is largely based on conversations with community Elders. From there, the report identifies how the Sicangu currently experience Rosebud's food system. This second section is comprised of information and stories gathered via Elder interviews, community and youth roundtable discussions, farmers' market surveys, and interviews with food producers and vendors. The third section of the report explores the community's perspective on the role of food as medicine, for both physical and spiritual health, and where current practices are lacking in this regard.

The fourth section of the report identifies current work that is being done regarding food issues on the Rosebud Reservation. The fifth and final section of this report is concerned with identifying the community's desired experiences around food. This chapter of the report was compiled via testimonies gathered during Elder interviews, community and youth roundtables, farmers' market surveys, and surveys with Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market tribal entrepreneurs. This section provides the basis for the "Food Sovereignty Master Plan," a twenty-five year plan that will be the guiding document for the work of the Food Sovereignty Initiative moving forward. The Master Plan will take into account the well-being of the next seven generations, while providing actionable steps to move towards a sovereign food system for the Sicangu Lakota Oyate.

¹⁰ <http://www.nativeprogress.org/en/lakota/the-four-values-of-the-lakota-people>

I. Past Experiences Around Food for the Sicangu Lakota Oyate

Gardening and canning vegetables in the summer, foraging wild berries and *timpsila* to dry for the winter, raising chickens for eggs and meat, hunting deer, rabbit, and various wild birds, and drying *bapa* meat to last until the weather became warm again were activities familiar to many of our Sicangu Elders in their childhood. Many of the Elders interviewed on their experiences around food told stories of self-sufficient or nearly self-sufficient childhoods, when their families gardened, hunted, and foraged in order to survive the harsh Rosebud winters. While essential to securing enough sustenance to last during the coldest months of the year, these activities also played a vital role in bonding families and communities together. Modern convenience foods have made life easier for the Sicangu in many regards, but have also made it more difficult to keep traditional practices alive.

Lynette Murray, who originally hails from Pine Ridge but has called Parmelee home for decades, felt that learning how to produce their own food bonded her and her siblings together. During her childhood, her family grew everything they ate and canned foods for the winter. The only thing they bought was meat on occasion, if they didn't have any meat from hunting. In her words, *"We ate a lot of wild birds, wild fruit, and out of our gardens. I was kind of spoiled. It's hard to live in a time where you have to pay a lot of money for that kind of stuff and have to travel long ways for it."* The experience of working together to ensure their survival during the winter was a family bonding experience, one that she continued with her own kids after moving to Rosebud. Every autumn when her father was still alive, Lynette would travel to Pine Ridge to help him harvest. For Lynette, as for many of the Elders interviewed, growing, preparing, and eating food was a family experience: *"I mean, we didn't have much, but we learned how to do all these things together and that, you know, that was really the most important part of us growing up. We're still pretty close... but also my parents are gone."* The loss of older generations who possessed and practiced more traditional food harvesting and preservation has led to a decline in traditional food practices accompanied by a decline in community.

Not only was food a shared experience for siblings, but **community members and Elders also played a role in passing on the wisdom needed to grow, cook, and preserve food. These practices exemplified the Lakota value of *wacantognaka*, or generosity;** individuals and communities cared for each other through selflessly sharing food and food knowledge. When Lynette first moved to Parmelee in the 1970's, *"The older people, the elders. They always took me under their wing. I mean, they were really good to me. And we'd visit a lot about a lot of things...We were trying to build a community garden down by the creek and so that the kids could learn how to take care of it and everything and they could have their own store or, you know, sell their stuff and everything."* Ronnie Cut, of Rosebud, recalls that when his mother moved their family to Parmelee in the 1970's from where they had lived northwest of Wanblee, nearly every home in the community had a garden. In his words, "Our mom Angie used to make us make her garden for her because every family had one, and I don't see that today."

Learning about food and generosity from grandmothers was a common experience among the Elders surveyed. Tina Martinez, of the Spotted Calf and Spotted War Bonnet Tiospayes who grew up in St. Francis and Spring Creek, recalls visiting her grandma Nida in Spring Creek, helping her prepare food for winter and for visitors. She learned food preservation techniques along the way; when berries were ripe, Tina and her fellow young relatives helped her grandmother pick berries and chokecherries by climbing trees and shaking them until the berries fell onto a sheet on the ground where they were collected before being poured into a 5 gallon bucket. They “... learned how to preserve them...” by drying berries outside. Her grandmother’s backyard, in addition to serving as a space to dry berries, also served as butchering grounds for the cow her uncles would bring home each year, as well as home grown chickens. Chicken and beef supplemented the *bapa*, deer meat provided by Tina’s uncles, that her grandmother sliced into thin strips and dried. When Tina was raising her own kids in Joplin, Missouri, grandparents living in the neighborhood shared their knowledge of cooking and gardening. *The knowledge and wisdom, or woksape, possessed by Elders regarding producing, preparing, and preserving food was generously shared between generations, promoting both health and community.*

After returning to Rosebud in the year 2000, Tina continued to practice the skills she learned from her grandparents and Elders and carried on the tradition of sharing food and knowledge between generations within the community. She plants a garden each year, and “*...if I ever over abundantly plant a garden, I still have the community elders come over and pick what they want* so I have a lot of people, even yesterday and throughout the weekend, I had people backup into my garden area and select whatever was ripe for them to take. *And throughout the winter time people know to call me for chokecherries, plums, tomatoes, green beans and squash that I’ve already put in the freezer.* So at this point, its early September, I already have all of my harvested gardening in my freezer and canned. So I am ready for winter and that’s some of the things that our grandparents recommend that we do and I saw it happen; that she was preparing for all of us to have a meal ready on a continuous basis.” Taking care of community members through food is something Tina credits learning from her grandmother: “*My grandmother was very hardworking, very involved with the community, and helping feed families. If somebody didn’t have something she was ready to be there for them. So I’ve kinda picked up on some of those things that matter to her and started believing that I could do the same thing... I saw my relatives struggling and I felt like I could help in feeding them* so I’ve always been able to go out and pick berries, pick *Ceyaka* (wild mint) and pick all of the medicines that I knew would help the people.”

In addition to wild harvests and home butchering, *the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), generally known as the commodity food program, commodities, or “commods,” also played a role in the diets of some Sicangu Elders in their youth. FDPIR is a current-day legacy of the destruction of Native foodways.*¹¹ Handing out commodities to tribes is a centuries old practice, and at times was used to procure tribal support, such as during the Civil War. The current form of the program dates back to the 1800’s. In the latter half of that century,

¹¹ <https://www.ecowatch.com/indigenous-peoples-day-native-foodways-2610915673.html>

the U.S. Congress moved tribes onto reservations and instituted food rationing, as the U.S. government had previously destroyed native food systems. These commodity foods were foreign to the diets of Natives, and frequently included spoiled food.¹² Commodities are a primary source of food for many Natives to this day. While Congress expanded tribal control over FDPIR programs in the 2018 Farm Bill to allow for more culturally appropriate foods, the program, according to those individuals interviewed for this report, has historically lacked nutritious, culturally relevant foods.¹³

For Sicangu Elders, flour, lard, and canned meat were all common commodity provisions, as well as baking powder, salt, and butter; for many, bread made frequent appearances on the dinner plate. But while commodity foods once served as a supplement to home-grown and wild-harvested foods, over time they, along with fast food and processed foods, have overtaken traditional and healthy whole foods as the dietary staples of the Sicangu. When our Elders were growing up, nearly every family had a garden. Nowadays, our Elders tell us, gardens are not nearly as common as they once were. Over the last half century, fewer and fewer children have grown up gardening and much of that knowledge has since been lost. Instead, reliance on grocery stores, restaurants, and fast food has become commonplace to the detriment of the community's health.

The boarding school system that separated Native children from their families was a major factor that contributed to the loss of traditional *woksape* of gardening, hunting, and foraging for indigenous foods. Of the Elders interviewed for this project, most recall learning to grow, harvest, and process food from their parents or grandparents. Families prepared food for harsher seasons as well as cooked and ate together on a daily basis. Food was a central tenant that bound both families and communities together. But according to Lynette Murray, that connection was harmed by forced attendance at boarding schools: *"It's just the way that, you know, boarding school life, the government oppression, you know, the way that they did things to really destroy our, our culture, our way of life, and in a lot of ways they did."* Severing children from these traditional pathways of knowledge created a generation of Sicangu who no longer possessed traditional wisdom around food. This gap in awareness proved to be detrimental not only to their health, but severed intergenerational relationships to the detriment of the community. And this loss of traditional knowledge around food did not only affect a single generation; the inability of survivors of the boarding school system to pass on food knowledge to their children continues to affect Sicangu diets and community to this day. As Lynette phrased it, "... a lot of things have changed. But it all stems from not being taught at an early age because the connection was broken with a lot of families... with the kids taken away and sent to school."

¹²

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-stark-reminder-of-how-the-us-forced-american-indians-into-a-new-way-of-life-3954109/>

¹³

<https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/the-press-pool/native-american-leaders-hail-2018-farm-bill-as-a-historic-milestone-OK55MqfLCKsYyIBSty3hgg/>

Currently, many families don't eat together on a regular basis. Out of sixty-four individuals surveyed during community roundtables, only 38, or less than 60%, responded they shared a meal with their family at least once a day. 12 respondents (18.75%) shared a meal with their family at least once a week or more, while 8 individuals, or 12.5% of roundtable attendees, rarely shared a meal with their family. These statistics may be skewed in favor of those who share meals, as participants at roundtables are likely to have a higher than average interest and concern in Rosebud's food system and may therefore be more likely to share family meals than other community members. These statistics are alarming in light of the fact that communal dining fosters both community and health; Sicangu elders attribute current health crises facing the Rosebud population in large part to unhealthy foods and eating habits. According to Ronnie Cut, "Our parents, our mothers and grandmothers will feed us healthy foods of each group, the four food groups, and if you didn't like what was cooked you didn't eat. Unlike today, if you don't like something, your parents will make you pizza or something unhealthy for you. But something healthy was cooked every evening. Family ate together. So that's why every family member individually has diabetes or some sort of health problem. *Because when our mothers and grandmothers cooked it, everything was for everybody. And unlike today, we don't eat as a family; back then we ate as a family and all the food that was prepared was prepared from scratch; unlike today where we could get processed food* and put in microwaves, add water, instant foods and a lot of its got preservatives and gots stuff to make stay fresh and stuff like that which isn't good for the body."

Healthy habits are usually passed on from parents and grandparents to their children; not eating together and making unhealthy eating choices when children are young (although those choices may be due to necessity, whether that be economic or time-based) can have lasting impacts on an individual's health and the health of future generations. Ironically, saving time in the short run by eating processed foods can cause major long-term (and time consuming) health issues. Health outcomes on the Rosebud demonstrate the detrimental effect of historical trauma, including severance from traditional food ways, that still impacts the Sicangu to this day. The average life expectancy on the reservation is sixty-eight and a half years, with premature death (years of life lost before age seventy-five) occurring at rates three times higher than that of the rest of South Dakota and the U.S. as a whole. Nine percent of the South Dakota population suffers from diabetes, but seventeen percent of the Rosebud community is afflicted with the diet-related disease. Obesity, which is associated with high rates of diabetes, affects thirty-eight percent of adults in Todd County, while thirty-one percent of South Dakotans and twenty-eight percent of the U.S. general population are obese. The most common cause of death on the reservation is heart disease, as it is for most U.S. populations. However, the mortality rate for those with heart disease was significantly higher for Natives living on the reservation than white individuals living on the Rosebud, and also higher than other Native groups elsewhere in the U.S.¹⁴

Given these statistics, instilling healthy habits in children from a young age can have a positive affect not only on their own health but the health of their children, grandchildren, and

¹⁴ Rosebud Sioux Tribe Health Administration, 2018 Community Health Profile

community as a whole. Tina Martinez believes that her own adherence to the food and cooking practices she learned as a child in her adulthood have helped her family remain healthy despite generational differences in age. According to Tina, “In the time our grandparents left this world, we evolved into a whole new way of cooking. A whole new way of eating and in that process we learned how to rely on fast food, the easier the food was made for consumption, I think we relied on that as young families and I didn’t do that; *I made a conscious choice to grow a garden from when I first got married. I have a garden every single year.* I grew all kinds of squash and I preserved it.... *And I have never used processed food or used my microwave for anything to cook our meals with. It’s always been a wholesome thinking in the foods that go into our bodies and into my children’s lives so that we can maintain a good healthy food system. So my daughters and my son also have developed that themselves too.* They enjoy cooking for their kids and I noticed that they don’t buy all the frozen foods and all the frozen pizzas and chips and pop. I noticed that they don’t do a lot of that. And I’m really thankful for that.”

Traditional food practices not only promote individual and community health, both physically and otherwise, but are a way to maintain connections to grandparents and ancestors and promote a continuous community throughout the generations.

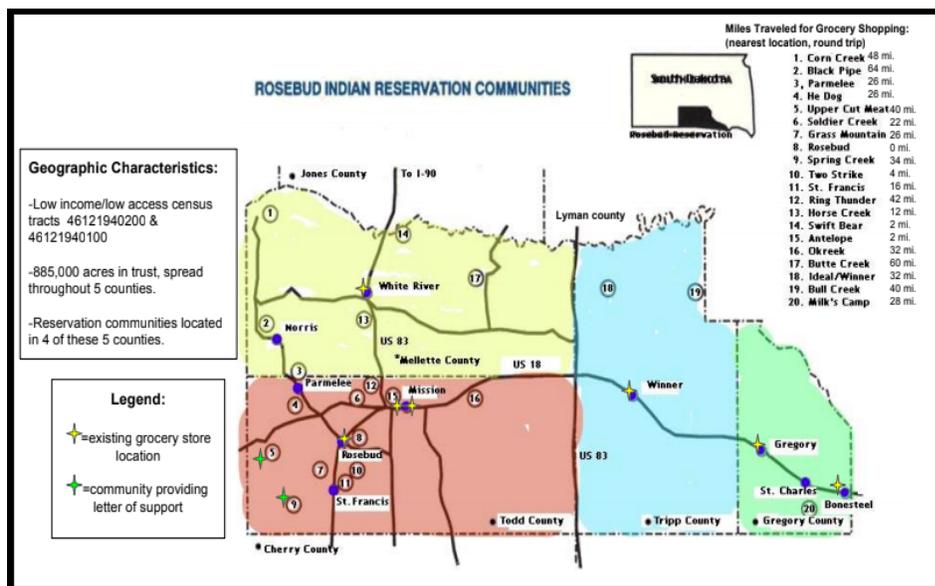
As Tina puts it, “*Our grandparents had a way of life that, ya know, we could carry on for them.* So I encourage everyone to do that, I encourage them to grow a garden. I have chickens, I have ducks, you know, go back to the old ways of living and maintaining a good life.” **Not only do traditional foods and practices promote community and Lakota identity and values, but harvesting of traditional foods, be it plants or animals, promotes tribal food sovereignty. These practices also provide a path to preventing many of the diet-related illnesses that currently plague the Sicangu.** Homemade foods, made without artificial preservatives and added sugars, ensured that our Elders grew up healthier than many children today. By contributing to the effort to grow, hunt, and preserve those foods, they were also more intimately involved with the origins of their food and possessed a greater awareness of where food comes from. As Marilyn Hogan put it, “Mom used to dress the chickens all cut up and everything so we had to chase chickens and catch chickens...Dad did hunt grouse and pheasants...Mom made a lot of our vegetables, she canned so we had canned vegetables.... *Most of the stuff we grew and raised. Everything was nice and fresh.* Mom did a lot of baking so we had homemade bread, biscuits, homemade pancakes from scratch. *Everything was from scratch, because they didn’t have this preprocessed ready to use products. So that’s why everyone was healthier then; no artificial sweeteners it was either honey or regular sugar.*”

Healthy eating habits, including the foods themselves and the environment in which they’re consumed, promote both individual and community health on multiple levels, and are vital in promoting the health and longevity of the Sicangu Oyate. **The seventh generation of Sicangu to live on Rosebud are already here;** Sherry Red Owl, a retired educator, counts her grandchildren as the seventh generation of their family tree since the Sicangu were relegated to the reservation. The Sicangu have survived thus far through numerous challenges to not only their sovereignty, but their very existence as a cultural group. Throughout that time, however, there

have been unprecedented changes to the way of life on the reservation. In Sherry's words to the current generation, *"We need you. We need you to plan for our future, plan for our families. Plan for the sovereignty of the tribe. We want to make sure that Seven Generations from now we still have a tribe, and we still are a cultural group."* Involving our Sicangu youth in the next steps towards both food, and ultimately tribal sovereignty, is vital in promoting a modern Lakota food system that upholds Lakota identity and values.

II. Current Food Experience on the Rosebud Reservation

The Rosebud Reservation is home to 85% of the 34,947 enrolled tribal members of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate.¹⁵ The reservation spans 1,970.362 square miles, excluding off-reservation Trust lands.¹⁶ For reference, that's larger than the land area of both Rhode Island and Delaware.¹⁷ And yet, the reservation houses only three grocery stores, eight convenience stores, and three stand-alone venues to purchase prepared foods.¹⁸ These establishments are, for the large part, concentrated in the more populated communities of Mission/Antelope, Rosebud, and St. Francis. While some communities located close to Reservation borders may be able to access grocery stores located in Valentine, Winner, White River, and Martin, for the more isolated communities on the Reservation, food access of any kind, let alone access to fresh produce and other healthy options, is a constant struggle. Of the 20 communities that comprise the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, both on and off reservation land, two communities face 60 mile or more round trip journeys to reach a grocery store, another four communities face round trip journeys of at least 40 miles, and yet another eight communities must travel for over 20 miles roundtrip to reach a grocery store. While there are a few convenience stores located in communities that lack a grocery store, the options, according to community roundtable participants, are low quality and not fresh.



Transportation on the reservation is a key factor inhibiting food sovereignty, food security, and economic development and opportunity. Sixty-four participants at community roundtables

¹⁵ Rosebud Sioux Tribe Health Administration, *2018 Community Health Profile*

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosebud_Indian_Reservation

¹⁷ <https://state.1keydata.com/states-by-size.php>

¹⁸ Grocery stores: Turtle Creek Crossing Super Foods & Buche Foods (Mission), Allstop (Rosebud); convenience stores: Kary's (Parmelee), Gus Stop, Cenex, & Family Dollar (Mission), Valandra's II & B&Bs (St. Francis), PaulMart (Rosebud), and Rosebud Casino gas station (Sicangu Village); stand-alone venues: Subway & Starlite (Mission), and the Rosebud Casino (Sicangu Village).

indicated that they traveled by car to purchase groceries, but only eleven specified that the car was either their personal or family vehicle. Three participants specified that they either tried to catch rides with family or friends, carpooled, or used RST Transportation services if they were available. Lack of transportation was an issue raised during the HeDog roundtable, particularly how lack of transportation inhibits the ability to procure food at all in a community with no grocery or convenience store. In the words of one roundtable participant, *“One thing I didn’t hear is transportation, lack of transportation. People have EBT and there’s no way to get groceries, just Joe Kary’s – there’s nothing fresh there, it smells bad. Lack of transportation – we need it here.”* Kary’s is a convenience store located in Parmelee, 3.5 miles from HeDog, and is the nearest venue to purchase food items of any kind. While the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (RST) does operate a transportation program, the service is not easily accessible. Transportation is provided solely during the hours of operation, from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Service does require payment, and, aside from a shuttle to the casino operating from Monday to Thursday, is only available upon request. Any trips out of town must be scheduled at least two days in advance, and will only be completed if the service has not already been booked.¹⁹

Another concern raised by roundtable participants regarding access to healthy foods is that the issue can not merely be solved by bringing healthy produce to far-off communities. *The intersection between lack of housing, lack of traditional food knowledge, lack of economic opportunity, and lack of transportation all combine to inhibit individuals’ ability to choose healthy foods.* As a HeDog roundtable participant framed it,

“One more thing is food availability...with the lack of transportation I know one time there were people that came and they brought a whole bunch of fresh produce, tons of fresh produce, really good, but a lot of it went to waste. And the reason why it went to waste is because people didn’t want it. It wasn’t their fault, a lot of people didn’t have the means to preserve it, because sometimes there are three to four families living in one home and they don’t have the ability to can...If you’re living in one bedroom, you don’t have the ability to can enough food to last the winter. It’s not possible. There’s some levels of being practical on food preservation, and homelessness...you know, a lot of people won’t even say that – we’re proud people.”

Before individuals on Rosebud will truly have the ability to be self-sovereign regarding their food choices, issues of basic survival must first be addressed.

¹⁹

https://www.facebook.com/pg/Rosebud-Sioux-Tribe-Transportation-952782548240532/about/?ref=page_internal

But for the communities and individuals who are able to regularly access grocery stores on-reservation, **price, particularly the price of healthy food options, has proven to be yet another barrier in promoting healthy diets among the Sicangu.** When asked how they felt about the food choices available to them on Rosebud, customers surveyed at the Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market overwhelmingly responded with a desire for a wider variety of healthy options, including more fresh produce, at affordable prices. Price and transportation were widely cited by community members at roundtables, those interviewed at markets and Rosebud Fair, and by Elders as roadblocks to making healthier food choices.

Many Tribal members struggle to put food on the table, and **affordability is made further difficult by predatory practices of food purveyors.** In the words of one HeDog community roundtable participant, “It’s not just having nutritional food, it’s having food that you can buy. I was looking at prices [and a] five pound bag of potatoes can go up to nine dollars for a bag. I look at the prices at Sharp’s corner in Pine Ridge, in Winner, and the *prices change around food-stamp time. So that way the store owners think that that’s free money so they try to take it from our people... they’re taking advantage of the poorest people in the US... it’s like a food apartheid and its really sad that they think that they can...oppress our people through economics and nutrition.*” High food prices, particularly for fruits and vegetables, exclude many families from purchasing fresh produce. As a participant at the Antelope roundtable put it, “*The cost of fruit and vegetables is almost prohibitive for families here on EBT or SNAP,* and even then, you know, you’re not gonna spend all of that EBT or SNAP on fresh fruits and vegetables when you have a lot of people. You don’t get a healthy diet because of the poverty. And the other thing is that the processed meats and stuff.. Just the cost of hamburger, 10 lb bag of hamburger is \$39, and it’s not very good - it’s not good hamburger.”

Currently, many Rosebud residents rely on either SNAP (federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, and interchangeable with the term EBT on the reservation) or the commodity food program to provide for their families. In 2017, Todd County residents collected \$8 million in SNAP, with 71% (7,000 residents) of the county earning less than 185% of federal poverty guidelines.²⁰ Despite a high proportion of the community living in poverty, only 1,140 households, or approximately 4,024 people, received SNAP benefits (on average) between 2013 to 2017. 94% of SNAP recipients are Native. The average benefits for a household were \$585 per month, or \$7,017 per year. The average household included 3.5 individuals.²¹

While SNAP essentially functions like a debit card solely for grocery or home food producing purchases, and therefore in essence offers more freedom of choice than the commodity food

²⁰ Bureau of Economic Analysis — Regional Income Data: <https://apps.bea.gov/itable/iTable.cfm?ReqID=70&step=1> via Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center, *Sicangu Lakota Oyate Nation Farm & Food Economy* for Rosebud Economic Development Corporation, October 2019.

²¹ *Federal Census* via Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center, *Sicangu Lakota Oyate Nation Farm & Food Economy* for Rosebud Economic Development Corporation, October 2019.

program, it's not necessarily so liberating in practice. Given the lack of choice and high prices at grocery stores on-reservation, many Rosebud residents travel off-reservation to purchase groceries. Furthermore, **lack of education regarding traditional foods and even healthy non-traditional foods impedes Sicangu families from choosing foods that promote health.** In the words of a Rosebud roundtable attendee, *"... when they changed our way of getting food from commodities to EBT so we could go to the stores, our availability of food is there, we can go to the store and buy whatever we want. The problem is, our people aren't trained with it so they get their EBT cards and go to the store and buy five cases of bottled juice, and ten packs of chips."*

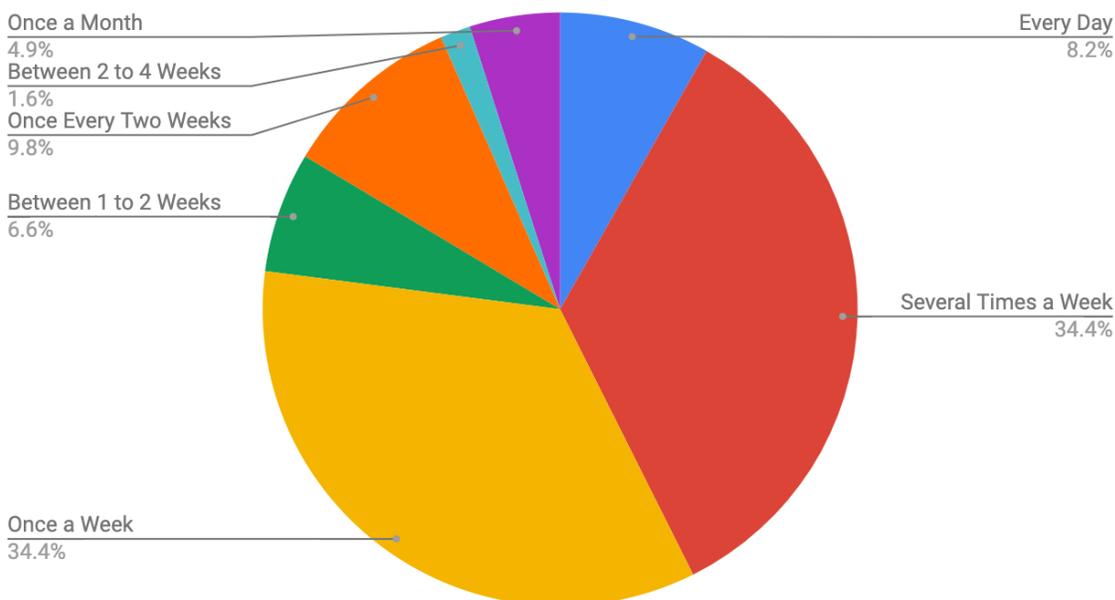
Lack of education, due to the severing of traditional pathways of food knowledge thanks to colonization and the boarding school system, was one major factor cited by community Elders compounding the crisis of diet-related illnesses among the Sicangu. But discussions among community roundtable participants reinforced the effect of price on an individual's decisions to make healthy food choices for themselves and their families. At the Rosebud roundtable, one community member spoke as to why their family frequently consumes 'junk' food, despite being well aware of the detriment to her family's health: "Pizza, pop and chips are always on sale. We eat that at least twice a week. And the other stuff, then you have to pay \$4 for a pound of hamburger, or its \$5.79 for a bag of apples and there's only like seven apples or six apples in the bag. And they're not even that good either. Five of them are bad." When choosing between cheaper, edible food, or more expensive fresh food that is low quality to the point of being inedible, families rationally choose not to waste money on spoiled food.

Not only is fresh food expensive at the grocery stores on the reservation, but fresh food is frequently sold on or close to the sell-by or expiration date. *(In interviews with the management of Turtle Creek Crossing Super Foods, Buche Foods, and Allstop, all three stores mentioned that fresh produce was harder to sell than processed foods).* While expiration dates are not federally mandated (aside from infant formula and some baby foods),²² and many foods remain safe to eat past their expiration dates, foods sold close to their sell-by date will go bad more quickly than foods sold well before the expiration date. As one Antelope roundtable attendee observed, *"That's one thing I've noticed in the stores, they let things sit too long and they don't pay attention to the expiration dates. So I'm not gonna buy something that's spoiled."* But when the only grocery stores in the community are both culpable of leaving food too long on the shelves, according to roundtable participants, community members who can't travel off of the reservation to acquire provisions are left with little choice. They must either spend money on shelf-stable, unhealthy processed foods, or fresh foods that might be past their prime and will go to waste before being used.

One measure of how frequently families might be consuming fresh fruits and vegetables is by the frequency of shopping trips, as fresh foods do tend to spoil sooner than those that are preserved. Over three-quarters of roundtable participants shopped for food at least once a week; however, given the high prices and low quality of fresh produce available on the reservation, families might still be falling short of their recommended intake of fruit and vegetables.

²² <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/features/do-food-expiration-dates-matter#1>

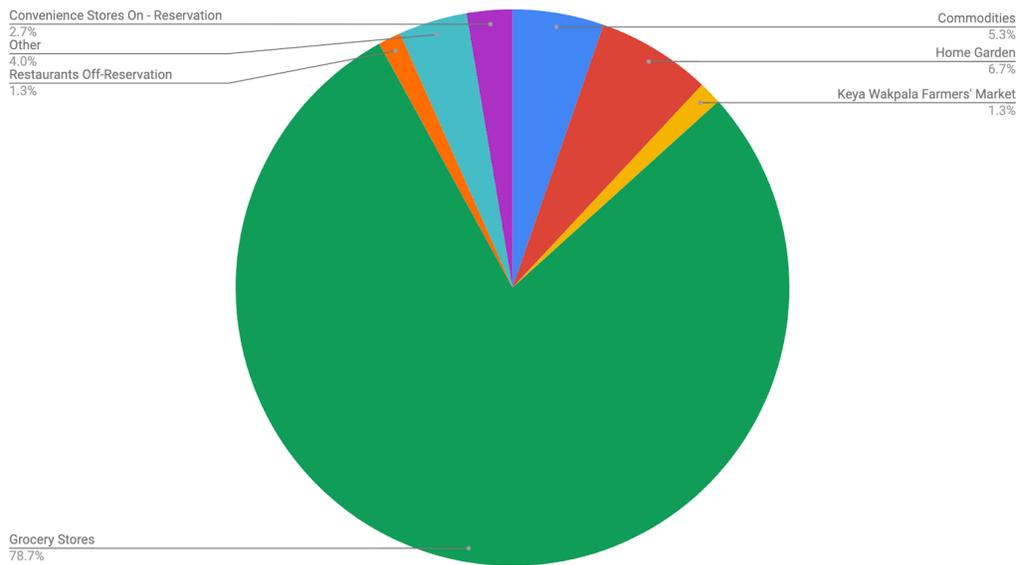
How often does your family shop for food?



High food prices and lack of freshness at stores on or bordering the reservation leads a number of families to travel long distances to purchase food. One youth participant noted that in addition to commodity foods, their family travels to Walmart, in Pierre (approximately 100 miles each way from Mission), to purchase food using SNAP funds, as the prices there are cheaper. At the federal mileage reimbursement rate of \$0.58 per mile, the cost of a round trip journey to Pierre from Mission would be \$116.00, including fuel costs as well as vehicle depreciation.²³ Traveling so far also inhibits the frequency with which food is purchased, with those traveling further distances purchasing food only once a month. Infrequent shopping trips make it harder to purchase fresh, healthy options such as meat and produce that might go bad before they can be consumed. Henderson's IGA, in Valentine, NE, was also mentioned by many roundtable participants as where their family purchases groceries. It takes approximately thirty minutes to an hour to travel to Valentine from Mission (thirty-two miles), depending on construction and traffic, and at least an hour from communities such as HeDog and Parmelee. Some roundtable participants travel as far as Rapid City (175 miles from Mission, over a 2 ½ hour drive) to buy groceries. At the federal rate, a one-way trip to Rapid City costs \$101.50. White River, located twenty miles north of the Rosebud Reservation, was also mentioned as where some families shop.

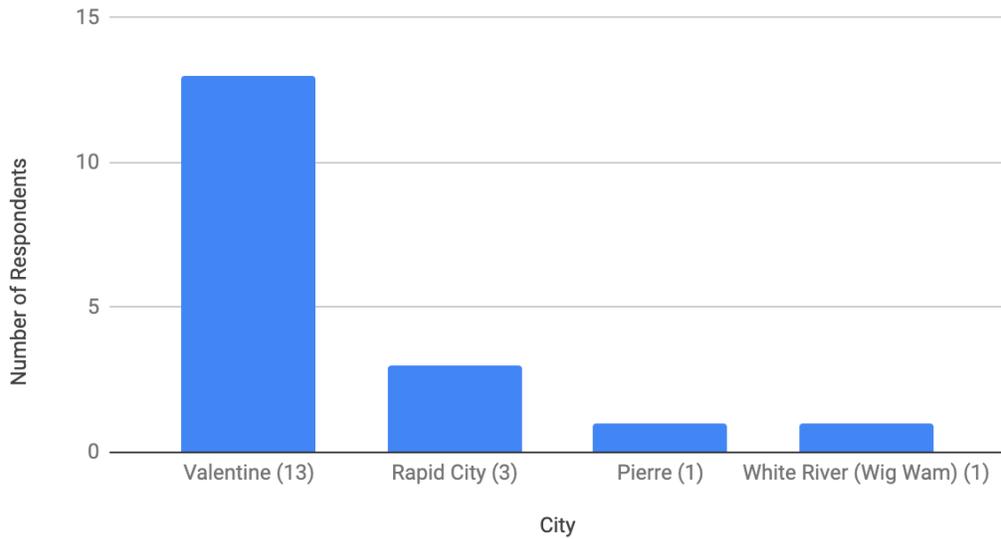
²³ <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-issues-standard-mileage-rates-for-2019>

Where do Rosebud Residents get their food?



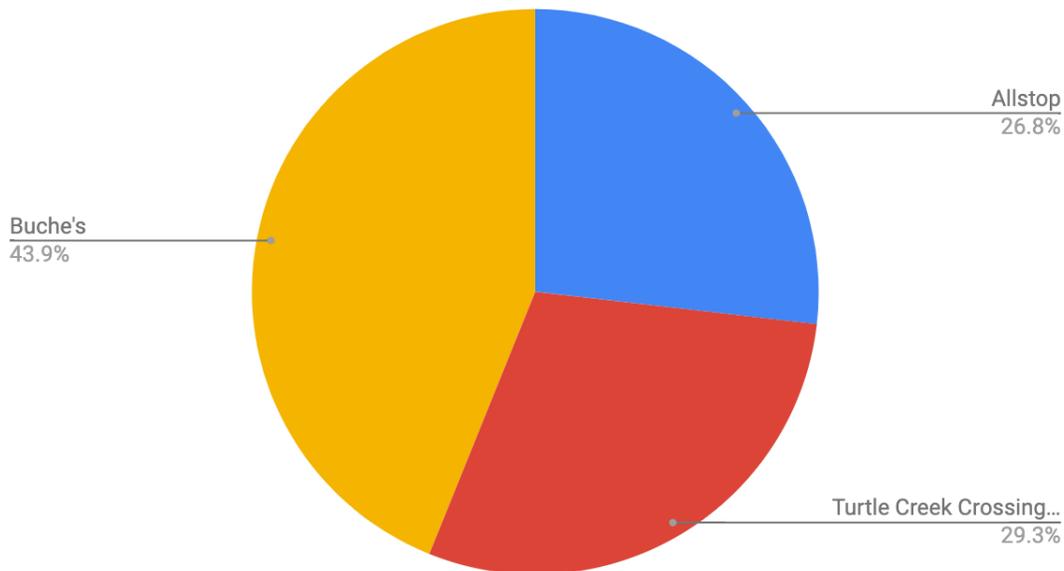
Many roundtable participants listed more than one place where they primarily sourced their family's food. In the 'Other' category, two participants listed Walmart, and another mentioned Sam's Club, as where they most frequently shopped. Of those who primarily purchased food at convenience stores, one shopped at Gus Stop in Mission, the other at Paulmart in Rosebud. Of the sixty-four roundtable participants, fifty-nine listed grocery stores as one of their primary sources of food. Sixteen did not specify whether they shopped on or off-reservation. Thirty-six respondents listed grocery stores on the reservation, while twenty-one listed off-reservation grocery stores.

Grocery Stores Off-Reservation Where Tribal Members Shop



Of the thirteen respondents who shopped in Valentine, nine listed Henderson’s IGA as their first-choice grocery store, two listed Scotty’s Ranchland Foods, and two participants did not specify. Of the thirty-six participants who shopped primarily at grocery stores on the reservation, the breakdown was as follows:

Grocery Stores On-Reservation Where Roundtable Participants Shop



Disparities between the physical set-up of stores on and off the reservation were also noted by participants at both the Antelope and Rosebud roundtables as to why Rosebud residents may be more likely to choose unhealthy food options. At the Antelope roundtable, a community Elder

remarked on the difference in store layouts: “You go to Sioux Falls or Pierre... they have fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, aisles of stuff. You come to our stores, we have about two tables worth and that’s it. They’ve got apples, oranges, different variety, everything that’s healthy for you. Then you start to get to the preservative stuff, canned goods and stuff like that. What’s on the end? The stuff that’s bad for you, potato chips, pop, crackers, cookies, all that stuff. That’s all in the back of the stores because they don’t really want to promote it. That’s city life. Everybody’s healthy. Here, we’re backwards. *What do we walk into? All the canned, pop, candy bars... right up front. Most of the stores in the city have a candy aisle but it’s in the back with the potato chips and all that stuff.* We’re just an odd set up here.” At the Rosebud roundtable, another community member noted the set-up of grocery stores on the reservation as contributing to the crisis of diet-related illnesses among the Sicangu. In his words, “...*we know how the stores are set up with all the sugars and salts, our addictions are right at the front of the store.*”

Visual merchandising is the catch-all term for the set of practices, primarily related to store layout and product presentation, that seeks to influence the items and number of items that shoppers buy. All stores rely on visual merchandising, but supermarkets, which tend to have low profit margins, rely heavily on product placement to increase sales.²⁴ The location of each item in a grocery store is a carefully thought out decision. Visual merchandising not only dictates what general area of the store products are located in, but goes as far as positioning more expensive brand versions of an item at eye level, while placing the generic version either up high or close to the floor so shoppers have to search harder to find a cheaper option. Items on sale or frequent impulse purchases are located close to the front to be more easily spotted by shoppers.

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During interviews with management of Buche’s, Turtle Creek, and Allstop, each grocery store noted that healthy options such as fresh produce were not top-sellers. At Allstop, pre-made foods, such as deli sandwiches or microwavable meals, were noted as the most popular options. At Buche’s, the dry grocery, or non-perishable goods, including unhealthy processed foods options, was the best-selling, followed by meat, frozen foods, and the deli section. At Turtle Creek, meat was noted as the best-selling option. **Management noted that they struggled with carrying a wide variety of fresh produce due to low consumer demand, and an inability to sell items before their expiration date.** High prices for healthier options, and lack of education as to what constitutes healthy food, likely contribute to a lower demand for fresh produce across all grocery stores on reservation. But stores also have a responsibility and play a role in influencing purchasing decisions; **are unhealthy options truly the best selling options solely due to consumer demand, or because customers are psychologically influenced by grocery store set-up to purchase unhealthy options? The answer is likely both.**

²⁴ <https://yourbusiness.azcentral.com/profit-margin-supermarket-17711.html>

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<https://progressivegrocer.com/how-visual-merchandising-can-help-boost-supermarket-spending#close-olyticsmodal>

III. Food is Medicine: Holistic Health

“I think it’s garbage” were the words of an Antelope community member when asked what she thought of the food choices available to her community. “Food is medicine... people really need [healthy food]” in order to avoid chronic diseases associated with diet. As someone with rheumatoid arthritis, she can “immediately feel the effects of my food intake, like instantly, I can just feel it... it opened my eyes to.... [the effects] of what you’re eating and putting in your body.” She attributes commodities and EBT as major causes of health issues to the Sicangu. (As discussed in section II above, lack of education on healthy choices and high prices for fruits and vegetables leads many tribal members to purchase low quality foods using EBT dollars. The FSI is hoping to combat this problem by accepting EBT at the Keya Wakpala Farmers’ Market and mobile farmers’ markets, which will be discussed in section IV.) But EBT and the commodity food program (FDPIR) have not only contributed to declines in physical health. **As grocery stores and the FDPIR have replaced traditional foods, spiritual health has also been negatively impacted.**

The food consumed by Sicangu Lakotas has changed remarkably since colonization and being relegated to the reservation. But even within the lifetime of our current Elders, there has been an incredible change. The Sicangu Oyate once survived on an intensely sovereign food system, hunting and harvesting wild foods for thousands of years. Over the past hundred and fifty years, the global food system has overtaken the options available to reservation residents. The global food system is not a new phenomenon; trans-continental and inter-continental trading routes have existed around the world for thousands of years.²⁶ And yet, until the past hundred years or so, most of the staple foods in people’s diets all over the world were harvested relatively close to where they were consumed. Speciality products (which, in the case of Europeans particularly, were primarily for the wealthy) came from further away. Advances in food preservation and modification techniques and modern transportation networks have led to people becoming increasingly disconnected from the food they consume. The lengthening of the food chain prior to reaching consumer’s plates has increasingly left room for invisible injustices in the food production system. These injustices occur both in crop and animal agriculture, and affect workers, animals, and the environment.

Injustice in the form of inhumane treatment of animals raised for meat was a common concern raised at community roundtables. In the words of an Antelope community member, “... my Grandma Edna used to say that *what's in the meat is what's gonna be in you. So if the animal was afraid, which a lot of cows are afraid, they're living in terrible conditions, when they're killed that's gonna go into your person, and that's what we're eating.* Feedlot cows, that fear is in the meat and it's in the people.” The sentiment that you are what you eat, including an animal’s emotions and temperament, was also expressed at the Rosebud and Parmelee roundtables. The impact of diet on human behavior was noted by a participant at the Parmelee roundtable: “... when you start eating healthy, when you eat healthy, like clean air, clean water, it does things to the body, creates goodness. Spirituality, all that stuff that you guys are trying to promote, it creates that

²⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK114491/>

and has that ability to promote that stuff. *Otherwise, we keep eating the way we eat then we have all of these feuds, communities, infighting, you know, all the.. it affects how we behave.*” As an Elder attending the Rosebud roundtable phrased it, “...All our people are... fighting each other... it’s what we eat. *Nowadays we eat chicken, we eat hog, look how they act. We act just like them. A long time ago we used to eat buffalo. That’s why we used to be family [with the] buffalo.*”

Fundamental differences between European colonizers and traditional Lakota understanding of relationships between humans and other animals can be traced to the etymology of the word in both English and Lakota. The use of the word ‘animal’ first appeared in the middle English lexicon in the early 14th century, directly replacing the word for ‘beast.’ It was most commonly used for non-humans, with a clear delineation between humans and other sentient creatures, with humans being understood to also possess intellectual, rational, and spiritual qualities.²⁷ The Lakota possessed a much closer relationship with other creatures; **there is no actual word for ‘animal’ in the Lakota language. Rather, the word “wamakaskan” translates to English as “living beings of the Earth” or “beings that walk the Earth.” All living beings are relatives to the Lakota, as all creatures have the same origin, from the “wamakaskan Oyate.**” The familial relationship between the Lakota and other beings was expressed through the respect, or *wowacintanka*, for the buffalo and all other aspects of nature that made their survival possible. Prior to colonization, no part of harvested buffalo went to waste. In contrast, Europeans distanced themselves further and further from connection to the natural world as they colonized and imposed capitalist systems on other civilizations, which has led to inefficient and incredibly wasteful systems of production.

In an industrialized system, the responsibility to raise animals humanely is usually shirked by the producer, as more humane treatment tends to lead to lower yields compared to inhumane treatment (given the same time frame), and therefore lower profits. The same Elder at the Rosebud roundtable encouraged food producers to be respectful and mindful of the impact of their treatment of animals raised for meat: *“Treat the animals in a more humane way. Pray with them. Talk to them. Because what [consumers] do... it’s not gonna give as much benefit as what they can do by raising them.”* And humane treatment extends beyond meat animals to include all life: *“Even our crops, even our plants, they’re all ... like, there’s a universal language of prayer. I don’t care where you come from, everybody knows how to pray, everyone prays to the one God. Universal language, everything living respects that. Understands that.”*

Prayer was an integral part of the ceremonial aspect of hunting and gathering food and medicine for the Lakota prior to colonization. An Antelope community member remarked on the decline of prayer in hunting practices, stating “I think the other thing is is the ceremonial aspect of hunting. *You know a long time ago when they would go hunting they would often... pray for the spirits of the [animals], ask for them to sacrifice themselves to feed the people, and I don’t know if people know or if people do that anymore [but] people... don’t eat what they kill... So you know it’s really being disrespectful because they’re not giving those animals the opportunity to nourish us.*” Whereas

²⁷ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/animal>

animals were once respected and honored for their sacrifice in nourishing the Sicangu Lakota, the increase of sport hunting on the reservation and inherent exploitation of the practice has led to a lack of respect for animals' lives. In addition to diminishing the spiritual significance of the hunt, as hunting becomes more regulated via the guide system and more and more tags are sold to non-tribal members for trophy hunting, it has become more difficult for community members to adhere to traditional practices such as the walk hunt.

An Antelope community Elder shared their perspective on the change in hunting practices on the reservation over their lifetime: "When I was younger I used to enjoy going out there to gather, you know what I mean? And then we started this guide system, where it became a trophy deal. So now we're chasing the animals all over, we can't even walk on the land. Because people are driving by you. The walk hunt, is part of being out in nature getting exercise and you're seeing that deer, it's amazing, that good shot, that one shot one kill, you know, you know don't let this animal suffer. Because you're right, that's what was taught to us. What's in that animal, if it was scared, you know... it's big money, people come here hunting trophies."

While the style and experience of hunting has changed on the Rosebud Reservation, so too has the method of butchering and preservation. **Tribal members who still hunt for food have difficulty finding facilities to process their kill.** A Rosebud roundtable attendee spoke to their experience in this regard: "... with... hunting... there's nowhere to process. So like the food processing place here, we took [my son's] to the locker about five years ago and it's still there. That's 'cause they opened the door and there's 75 deer just laying on the ground. And like, we're just gonna leave that one. I don't know what we're getting in, or who, I don't know what you're getting back. *You can take your deer to the locker, you don't know if you're getting the same deer that you took. That's what's scary about that. But then that's the need for us to be able to process our style of, dry, and retain that skill.*" Preserving knowledge of how to hunt and harvest a kill is essential to the survival of traditional skills that promote food sovereignty and ease food insecurity through self-sufficiency. These skills also ensure that an animal's life doesn't go to waste. **The community desire for education on traditional butchering combined with the expressed need for a meat locker with food safe conditions provides a potential area of opportunity for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe to create infrastructure and jobs via a tribal meat locker.**

These relatively new roadblocks that inhibit community members from hunting for their own food inherently makes them more reliant upon grocery stores and the commodity food program for sustenance, leading to lower holistic health outcomes. As a Rosebud roundtable attendee phrased it, reliance on colonized foods *"...affects us physically, like we are unmotivated, spiritually unmotivated, mentally unmotivated, because the food is literally...pressing us down."* Just as the hunting experience has changed from a spiritual activity to one that has become commoditized as entertainment, the decline in prayer in gathering has also held negative implications for spiritual health on both the individual and community level.

Giving thanks for an entity's sacrifice and role in nourishment used to extend beyond animals to plants and all parts of the natural world. As an elder at the Antelope community roundtable

phrased it, "... when you're gathering, when you're picking chokecherries or turnips, or picking ceyaka, or something, you offer tobacco and thank them for providing." The importance of prayer in harvesting was also mentioned by a HeDog community Elder. Referring to their childhood, they mentioned that "... before we actually go harvest our food, our elders said prayers, and it's protection. With every plants, medicinal plants, there's animals they work with they had to ask for that help."

The decline in prayer in gathering practices has made wild harvested foods and medicine less effective. In the words of a Rosebud community Elder, "That's why our medicines today, they don't treat our health like the medicine a long time ago used to. Because we don't ask for, we don't give thanks for, we just go to a laboratory, they can do one thing, it's not holistic." Spirituality was always an important aspect of natural medicines for the Sicangu Lakota, and excluding that aspect of the traditional medicinal practice has made medicine less effective. **The commodification of plants and animals has led to lower spiritual health, and lessened community grounding in Lakota identity and values, as the natural world has shifted from being conceptualized as family to a body of resources ripe for exploitation.**

David Espinoza, Sr., a Rosebud roundtable participant, directly attributed the shift in mindset that devalues the natural world to capitalism via colonization. In his words, "In the beginning of our time there were always these evil spirits that came and we battled and fought them... I'm not saying that white people are evil spirits, I'm saying that... there's people like that that just solely operate in selfishness. Solely operate for profits. And that's why we're in this situation. When we start putting those profits over people, over humans, over our humanity, then we have this." Given the dominant influence of capitalism on people's lives in the current day, remembering the importance of spirituality and prayer is particularly important. In David's words, "... *the whole goal is that we live our life in order to get to the other side.... And so, prayer is so important for us. It always was, and it always will be. And understanding who we are as Lakota, understanding our spirit, understanding our spirit goals, where it comes from, is important. We understand those things that way, we ground ourselves in our spirituality these other things will be easier to overcome...* Your life will be easier to deal with. It's not gonna make it easy and be done for you, but because you have those spiritual tools to overcome those hardships, and those things, it will be like that. It'll be easier like that."

While traditional practices regarding both food and spirituality may seem difficult to adopt for those who are unused to them, slow steps can be more effective in the long run than abrupt change. They may be difficult to implement at first, because as David put it "... a lot of times it's hard because we're in a financial situation that doesn't always allow us or we're in a situation where we can't cook the best things or make the best options and choices so we just grab what we can that's gonna get the job done so we can move on to the next piece of the day." But by changing "... just little things that we do gradually... slowly picking up these different habits, eating habits..." individuals will be able to build holistic health over time. In David's words, "Everything we do is affects everything, our whole... well-being... We know the four aspects of our humanness. And so, food is that. And you say what the question is how does food make us,

you know what I mean, or break us? How does it make us economically, spiritually, mentally, physically? You know we know that the majority of the foods that we're buying that are tearing, myself personally, tearing us down, more than it's building us up. And so we continue to fight that battle, and just kinda go forward." And moving forward with prayer, intention, and action is exactly what the Sicangu Lakota are doing.

IV. Signs of Hope: Community Steps Towards a Sovereign Food System

While everyday spiritual experiences associated with food may have been lost for many Rosebud residents, traditional practices are still alive and cherished in a number of other ways. Among these includes the power of dreams and prayer. While there is still much to be done to revitalize and rebuild a local food system on the Rosebud Reservation, as one attendee at the Rosebud roundtable remarked, the work that is currently being done is no accident nor coincidence, but rather the result of faith and prayer. In his words, *“... there’s prayers... and maybe that’s why you guys are doing this work now. We don’t think about that, but somewhere someway along the line somebody made this prayer. That we want these things to come back... And so you’re doing it... Those were prayers and visions, just not something that, you know, blindly happened.”*

Just as traditional practices are now foreign to many Sicangu Lakota, “... when this reservation came... the coming of this new era, this new people, these new things were coming and our people... lived in fear... Everything that was normal to them was being shaken.” But it has taken less than 200 years for what was once unknown to become the default way of life. While it may seem as though change “...takes a long time... it could be a blink of an eye for somebody, for something.” But while dreams and visions can be the catalyst, change won’t occur unless people *“... start acting on those dreams and visions and... slowly build up that group or that consensus and those people, and that change happens. A lot of times it’s so slow that we don’t acknowledge it or we don’t think it’s working.”*

Change is difficult, whether it’s an introduction to a new way of life or a return to traditional practices when those new ways have become entrenched in the daily lives of individuals. It takes courage, or *woohitika*, to be willing to open your mind and embrace the process of change, even when it’s for the better. **In all of our discussions with community members regarding the food system on Rosebud, some kind of return to traditional practices was brought up not only as a desired change but as necessary to strengthen Sicangu identity and culture.** While traditional practices surrounding food have changed in many ways over the last fifty years, let alone the past hundred and fifty years, there are a number of community members and entrepreneurs that are committed to reimagining and revitalizing a local foods system. Despite a variety of challenges, these individuals are courageously working towards building sovereignty through food for the Sicangu Lakota.

The Food Sovereignty Initiative (FSI) is one such organization working to change the food system on the Rosebud reservation. **The Initiative’s mission is to use food to empower Sicangu families and build relationships, with the vision of growing a new generation of Lakota food producers and entrepreneurs.** The FSI accomplishes its mission and vision through strategic goal setting. These goals act as guiding principles for the FSI as the Initiative aims to 1) deepen Lakota identity through food experiences, 2) increase the use of local foods at home, 3) increase food and agriculture related enterprises locally, and 4) build community through food. The educational and cultural programming, community outreach, and economic development work undertaken by the FSI all hark back to the organization’s overarching strategic goals.

The FSI began educating and producing food for the Sicangu community in 2014 with a 1-acre permaculture teaching garden located behind Turtle Creek Crossing Super Foods to the west of Mission. The Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market began operations during the summer of 2015, and spent its first three years selling in front of Turtle Creek Crossing. In 2018, the market moved to its current location in front of the Food Sovereignty Initiative office, located two blocks east of Wells Fargo in Mission. Both the garden and market have expanded as the FSI has gained experience and community interest and investment have grown. Much of the yield increases and program growth is thanks to the work of FSI paid summer interns, who work 20 hours a week in the garden during the height of the summer months. While interns are helping the FSI make locally grown produce available to the community at affordable prices, they are also learning valuable skills such as gardening, wild foods harvesting, teamwork, and leadership. As the Initiative has grown, the FSI has been able to offer internship opportunities to an increasing number of youth. In its first year, the FSI hired three summer interns. In 2019, the FSI employed sixteen paid summer interns, three of whom completed incubator internships. The incubator program will be discussed in depth later in this section. Seven out of the sixteen interns had previously completed internships with the FSI and had chosen to return for the 2019 season. **The FSI is the largest employer of youth interns on the reservation.**



In 2017, the total harvest for the Keya Wakpala Garden came to 1,935.67 pounds. In 2018, garden yields totalled 5,481.56 pounds, and in 2019 the garden produced 7,364.08 pounds of market-quality produce. The increase in total harvest weight was accompanied by an increase in crop varieties, with the garden bringing 35 crop varieties to market in 2017, 40 varieties in 2018 and 53 varieties in 2019. **The FSI has not only increased the variety and amount of produce available during the market season year over year, but has substantially increased the number of markets held as well as average pounds sold per market each season.** In 2017, there were an average of 34.08 pounds of produce sold at each market, with average market sales totalling \$86.43. In 2018, average sales increased to \$198.92 per market. In 2019, average sales per market came to \$241.19.

Total sales for the market season increased from \$1,790.30 in 2018 to \$2,170.70 in 2019. **The increase in sales can be at least partially attributed to the increased length of the market season, as well as the introduction of weekly mobile markets held outside of Mission.** In 2017, the Food Sovereignty Initiative hosted 11 farmers' markets. In 2018, due to adverse weather events, only 9 markets were held in Mission. In 2019, the Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market was held 14 times, beginning in mid-July. The 2019 market season began two to three weeks earlier than the 2017

and 2018 market seasons, respectively. In addition to weekly markets in Mission, the FSI travelled to St. Francis and Parmelee to host seven mobile farmers' markets in each community to make affordable fresh produce available to a wider number of individuals. Sales for each day of mobile markets averaged \$51.55. **The mobile farmers' market, piloted during the 2019 season, was the first step taken by the FSI to determine the feasibility of offering a mobile grocery store on the reservation.** A mobile grocery store will be able to travel to more remote communities to offer nutritionally sound and culturally appropriate foods at affordable prices to those most in need of them.



The FSI also hosted SNAP/EBT markets on the 10th of August and September outside of Turtle Creek Crossing Super Foods. The first EBT market ever held by the FSI took place in September 2018, in an effort to reach a wider number of community members after no EBT sales were recorded during the 2017 season. At that market, the FSI recorded 10 distinct SNAP swipes totalling \$57.50. In 2019, the FSI recorded 10 total SNAP swipes on five different market days, totalling \$71 in SNAP sales. **In 2019, the FSI also offered its produce to the community through institutional sales at local convenience stores for the first time.** Institutional sales for the 2019 market season totalled \$158.75. Vendors carrying produce from the Keya Wakpala Garden throughout August and September included B & B's and Valandra's II in St. Francis, and Kary's in Parmelee.

The increase in sales and yield was made partially possible through construction of a 4-season greenhouse and 3-season high tunnel to extend the growing season at the Keya Wakpala Garden. For the winter of 2019 - 2020, the FSI plans to continue utilizing the greenhouse and

high tunnel to grow produce outside of the normal South Dakota growing season. While this produce will not yet be brought to market, the indoor space will allow the Initiative to expand its educational offerings moving forward. This will help the FSI achieve another one of its objectives: expanding opportunities for local producers and entrepreneurs as well as promoting small scale farmers and ranchers on the Rosebud Reservation.

During the 2019 season, the Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market expanded its capacity and was able to comfortably host eleven vendors, making it the third largest farmers' market in the state of South Dakota. The FSI provided canopies, tables, and chairs for all vendors, including a booth for the FSI to sell produce from the Keya Wakpala Garden. The expanded capacity and increased popularity of the markets led to higher vendor consistency, with nine out of seventeen total vendors attending at least four times, and the top five vendors attending over 77% of markets. Vendor turnout and consistency has been increasing year after year; seven out of seventeen vendors attended at least four markets in 2018, with the top five vendors attending 55% of markets. In 2017, ten vendors attended over the course of the market season, and six out of the ten attended at least 50% of markets. In 2019, the market during prime season had grown to the point where the Food Sovereignty Initiative parking lot, where the market currently takes place, reached full capacity.



Vendor offerings during the 2019 market season included cold coffee beverages, homemade burritos, street tacos, homemade baked bread and pastries, jellies, jams, and syrups, wild harvested sage and sweetgrass, sustainably raised beef, fresh produce, eggs from local gardens and farms, handmade jewelry and other art pieces, and handmade soaps. Buffalo Brew, Billie's Burritos, Arrow Wild Harvesters, Rez Raised Beef, and the SGU (Sinte Gleska University) Greenhouse were the most frequent vendors, offering a variety of goods to the community each week. In order to gauge the challenges of operating a small production business on the reservation and the impact of the Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market, the Food Sovereignty Initiative surveyed vendors in order to identify their needs and how the FSI can best continue to support small producers. **Market access was the most commonly cited challenge to business by vendors, including a place to legally offer their products on a year-round basis.**

Vendors noted economic necessity as motivation for starting their businesses, as well as offering high quality products to the reservation community at affordable prices, socializing with the community, and turning hobbies such as gardening and baking into an opportunity to earn extra income. When asked what role they envisioned their business playing in the future of Rosebud's food system, vendors envisioned helping consumers make healthier choices, revising and expanding Rosebud's food code to make it easier for local producers, and saw their businesses as part of a burgeoning local economy. Vendors are also invested in preserving Rosebud's natural environment through their businesses, whether that be sustainable ranching or harvesting wild foods and medicine, and in helping the community learn to garden, preserve food, and make healthier food choices.

The Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market also serves as a community gathering space for producers and customers to meet old friends and make new connections through food and other handmade goods. In 2019, the FSI expanded youth programming at the market, as a way to educate kids in a fun way about both Lakota culture and healthy choices. "*Wakanyeja taku waste unspepi kte ksto/yelo*," or, "The Children Will Learn Good Things," was in operation at six markets during the height of the 2019 market season. Children were involved in planting, harvesting, exercise, and consuming fresh produce through fun activities. At least four youth participated at each market, with upwards of sixteen participants during the busiest market days. Each market, children who participated were awarded a token worth \$1 to buy produce from the Food Sovereignty Initiative booth.



The youth programming relied upon the “Our Fridge” garden, an aspect of the FSI’s community outreach new to the market this season. *The garden, located in front of the FSI office in Mission, is free for the community to come and harvest.* 2019 offerings included a variety of heirloom tomatoes, corn, and squash, hot and bell peppers, sweet peas, and root vegetables, including carrots and beets.

The Food Sovereignty Initiative also works to feed the community in a variety of other ways, including donating produce leftover from the farmers’ market. 2019 produce recipients included the commodity food program, Tree of Life, and the White Buffalo Calf Women’s Society. The Boys and Girls Clubs on the reservation also received donated produce through FSI administered youth cooking classes. The FSI also works to educate youth on growing practices via gardens at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Rosebud and Mission, in order to provide youth with a holistic understanding of where food comes from and how to prepare it. The Food Sovereignty Initiative cooked meals for Tiwahe Glu Kini Pi, the SGU horse ranch camp, during the summers of 2018 and 2019, using produce from the Keya Wakpala Garden and local buffalo meat. The FSI is working to educate the wider Rosebud community on making healthy food choices utilizing the options available to shoppers at local grocery stores. This education is disseminated via weekly healthy dish sampling at Turtle Creek Crossing Super Foods and monthly cooking demonstrations during the first half of 2019 on EBT market day. The Food Sovereignty Initiative attends community meetings throughout the year, and provides a nourishing and filling meal at each meeting we attend. The FSI also offered information on its programming at six other community events during 2019, including Rosebud Fair, IHS Career Fair, Todd County Environmental Fair, SGU Founder’s Day Family Fun Night, a presentation at the St. Francis

Indian School, Celebration of Life, and a Lakota Elder Symposium in the Milks Camp community. The FSI hosted nine separate groups in the Keya Wakpala Garden during 2019, including seven school groups. Excluding community members reached during the Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market, the FSI connected with nearly 1,200 community members during 2019.



Other notable community events hosted by the FSI include four buffalo harvests, each completed in collaboration with a different group of youth participants. These groups included Boys with Braids (a group for men and boys who have long braided hair who meet for cultural activities), Todd County Middle School, and St. Francis Indian School. At each buffalo hunt/harvest, a Sicangu Elder was present to tell the story of the buffalo, sing a prayer, offer tobacco, and give thanks to the buffalo for its sacrifice to the Lakota people. Youth were shown the proper way to harvest the buffalo, and were offered opportunities to try their hand at it. Organs, which are considered sacred, were given to the Elders as thanks. The buffalo meat was used in meals prepared by the FSI for community events and meetings. Our most recent buffalo harvest was done with the Todd County Middle School Student Council. Twenty-five students helped with the hunt and harvest, and assisted with cooking the meat for a Family Night held at the Middle School shortly after the hunt. The opportunity for youth to experience preparing a meal full circle, from the field to the plate, was invaluable. Such experiences help drive home the importance of culturally relevant food and how food impacts the health of their community.



In addition to educating the community on gardening and healthy food habits, the FSI is also working to launch a generation of local food producers on the Rosebud reservation. The Initiative has already taken steps towards increasing the number of farmers and ranchers producing food on the reservation through its paid educational internships. During the summer of 2019, the FSI hosted three Tribal members (two Sicangu Tribal members, and a Navajo Nation Tribal member who lives and works on Rosebud) as ‘incubator’ interns. **The internship was designed to create a learning environment free from financial risk for tribal members to gain the necessary skills to start their own small-scale food production operations.** This project aligned with the FSI’s goal of increasing the number of local food producers to revitalize Rosebud’s economy through food.

Each intern received their own plot of land in the Keya Wakpala Garden to plant crops. They also received hands-on training on planting, garden maintenance, and harvest techniques. The FSI also organized farm tours of Oyate Teca in Pine Ridge, SD and Cycle Farms in Spearfish, SD for the interns to learn more about scaling a farming operation should they wish to do so in the future. The FSI provided all needed supplies and tools, and at the end of the season each intern was provided a stipend to purchase supplies in order to start their own small scale growing operation. Each intern also had the opportunity to sell their produce at the Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market, either directly to customers or by selling wholesale to the Food Sovereignty Initiative to act as middle-man. Interns also received advice on the process of securing land through home and business sites through the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. **Of the three interns who completed the internship, two have expressed a serious interest in launching their own small scale growing operations.** One intern hopes to start a community pumpkin patch, and the other has expressed interest in polyculture food crop production.

In November 2019, the Food Sovereignty Initiative launched its Beginning Farmer Rancher (BFR) internship in collaboration with Dakota Rural Action (DRA). The paid, year-long internship will provide both in-class training with instructors from DRA as well as guidance from community members already running their own successful food production operations. The FSI has already planned and secured funding for three years worth of intern cohorts, with a total of 19 internship placements available from 2019 through 2022. The first cohort consists of five interns, two of whom are returning to work with the FSI after completing incubator internships during the summer of 2019. Interns will also receive hands-on farm training twenty hours per week in the Keya Wakpala Garden as well as guidance on business development. Upon completion, interns will have gained the skills and knowledge needed to go forth with launching their own small-scale farming and ranching operations, in line with the FSI's goal of increasing the number of tribal producers and entrepreneurs. The Food Sovereignty Initiative has also secured start-up funds to help those interns who successfully develop a business plan launch their small-scale enterprises. These new producers will be able to offer their goods to the community via the Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market, which is already providing economic opportunities for local and tribal entrepreneurs.

From humble beginnings in a field full of thistle behind the Turtle Creek Crossing grocery store in 2014, the Food Sovereignty Initiative has come a long way in community outreach and impact. While much has been accomplished in the past five years, there is still a breadth of work to be done. Food sovereignty is a vital step towards tribal sovereignty, and through insight gained via communication with individuals and communities on Rosebud, the Food Sovereignty Initiative plans to move forward to continue to work towards a sovereign food system. To paraphrase an attendant of the Rosebud roundtable, we will continue to model the change that we want to see through action guided by prayer, holding "... faith in those dreams and in the bigger vision, bigger picture, for a healthier us. As a people."

V. Food for Our Future: Reimagining the Food System of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate

While the Food Sovereignty Initiative has been joined by a number of local producers and entrepreneurs in taking steps to start building food sovereignty on the Rosebud, there is still a long way to go before the reservation no longer needs to rely on outside food producers and stores for sustenance. During interviews with community Elders, grocery stores, local food producers and vendors at the Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market, and roundtable discussion with youth and other community members, a number of ideas were brought up as areas for future projects and growth. Some of the steps recommended by the community fall under the purview of the Food Sovereignty Initiative, while others will depend on collaboration between engaged community members, Tribal Council, schools, food producers, and a host of other parties. The FSI has the opportunity to facilitate connections between other entities engaged in food sovereignty work and amplify their collective actions to make a greater impact.

Currently, most Rosebud residents procure the majority of their food from stores, rather than producing their own food or trading for food. While increasing self-sufficiency of individual food options and the reservation's overall food system by promoting tribal producers is a goal shared by the Food Sovereignty Initiative and most roundtable participants, *it is unlikely that grocery stores will disappear entirely from the reservation in the near future.* For now, many families on the reservation rely on grocery stores. Given their prolific role in the reservation's current food system, *implementing change among the reservation's supermarkets to encourage healthier food choices is potential way to promote health among the Sicangu.*

In a capitalist society, it's understandable that grocery stores with low profit margins feel the need to increase sales however they can. *But given the high rates of diet-related illnesses among Native communities, including among the Sicangu, grocery stores on the reservation have the ability and the responsibility to promote healthier options among their customers.* Looking to examples set by the Navajo Nation as to how stores and tribal policy can influence purchasing decision provides several possibilities for consideration. A Rosebud roundtable participant brought up changes to visual merchandising strategies on the Navajo reservation: *"Guys down in Navajo got this store. They had to provide the freezer, or the cooler, but this guy let them put all their good stuff right at the front. Switched around, like he bought into their whole deal, switched the store up for them."* The power of visual merchandising was noted in section II of this report as a key factor in purchasing decisions. Given the current health crises due to diet related illnesses plaguing the Rosebud community, changing layouts of reservation grocery stores to promote healthy food choices could change the way Rosebud residents shop, and ultimately lead to healthier diets and health outcomes.²⁸

In addition to changing the layout of grocery stores, the Navajo Nation implemented a junk food tax in 2014. The Healthy Diné Nation Act was passed to discourage purchases of unhealthy food options. The tax revenues were intended to be used for programs and infrastructure that would

²⁸ Rosebud Sioux Tribe Health Administration, *2018 Community Health Profile*

promote healthy lifestyle choices.²⁹ According to the same Rosebud roundtable participant, “... they put a certain tax on all the junk food that came on to their reservation. So all the stores, and then, they lobbied and got it to where local suppliers, they did this change and put all the healthy stuff and all junk food stuff in the back then they got it incentive as well. The stores or whatever. They generate over, outrageous millions of dollars on the junk food tax a year.” A tax on junk food would likely generate significant revenue for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, which could be used for a variety of needed programs. However, other Rosebud roundtable attendees raised concern over the impact of junk food on health, citing that a tax to raise the price of unhealthy food options and thereby discourage their consumption should also be accompanied by education on healthy choices.

One method of delivery for dietary education mentioned at the Rosebud roundtable was also inspired by the Navajo Nation: a food prescription program. Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment, or COPE, sponsors the Navajo Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program. Patients are ‘prescribed’ fruits and vegetables and given vouchers for free produce; each household member receives \$1 a day in vouchers. The program has benefited thousands of Navajo tribal members, and 85% of those enrolled met their goal of five servings of vegetables and fruit per day. One-third of children considered overweight when the program began were considered a healthy weight after six months of enrollment.³⁰ A food prescription program would likely meet with similar success on the Rosebud Reservation, and community members, via the Rosebud roundtable, have already expressed a desire for such a program. The FSI has begun exploring funding possibilities in order to operate a food prescription program and increase intake of fruits and vegetables among the Sicangu Lakota.

In addition to a junk food tax, changing store layouts, and food prescription program, community members at roundtables presented ideas for other needed changes to Rosebud’s food system. Greater transparency with the current food system was desired by a wide number of participants, with community members mentioning a need to know where food is grown and processed, and under what conditions. While farming does occur on the reservation, it is largely commodity ranching and farming, not food crops for local consumption. An increase in local foods farming would naturally lead to greater transparency in the reservation’s food system. Similarly, greater transparency in the meat consumed could be found by improving conditions for hunters. Making it easier for Tribal members to receive hunting tags, as well as improving local meat processing options, would alleviate some of the need to purchase meat from unknown sources at grocery stores. In order for tribal members to avoid taking their kills to Valentine and thereby moving funds off the reservation, Rosebud roundtable attendees mentioned the need for a community run meat locker.

Similar to a community meat locker, a community driven food cooperative was mentioned by attendants of the Okreek roundtable as a way of sharing skills such as gardening, food

²⁹ <https://navajotimes.com/reznews/committee-approves-distribution-policy-junk-food-tax/>

³⁰ <https://www.pih.org/country/navajo-nation>

preservation techniques such as canning and fermentation, and cooking with community members. A food co-op, or society, would increase transparency in the food system. It would also empower community members to take charge of their food choices by educating them on the importance of healthy options, and make healthy options more accessible by providing them with the skills needed to grow, harvest, cook, and preserve food at home. In addition to sharing knowledge, community food co-operatives/societies would bring individuals together to strengthen communities. They could also provide a space for Elders to share their knowledge with younger generations.

At the Antelope, Rosebud, and Okreek roundtables, younger community members expressed that both lack of knowledge and knowing who to ask were major impediments they faced in seeking out traditional foods *woksape* (wisdom), despite their desire to produce and harvest more of their own foods. A community food co-op would be able to organize skill sharing and mentorship between Elders, adults, and youth, in order to preserve the cultural knowledge of practices such as wild harvesting, hunting, butchering, and gardening. In this way, individuals would be able to become self-sufficient and take charge of their own health.

The need for self-sufficiency in the food system was expressed by a young community member at the Rosebud roundtable, where he decried the numerous 'programs' on Rosebud as largely ineffectual: "I'd rather have society type deals... where *we could have societies of men and women, like women, harvesters, berry pickers, and all that stuff, and also have men have hunters, as well, like hunting societies*, so we know, I hear Grandpa was saying, about taking care of the food holistically, like spiritually, get positive vibes all around. And, I feel like we have to achieve that through societies." Collaborative societies, or food co-operatives, would also allow the Sicangu to become stewards of the land again through a reawakening of traditional practices. Concern for the changing environment and the impact of exploitation was voiced at the Antelope roundtable: "... what they don't realize is they're changing the environment around us, the animals are changing too. And if you ever watch PBS programming and Nat Geo it's very educational on how small our territories are growing. Pretty soon the antelope, the deer, everything the one place they'll be able to populate and live is right here where we're at. People will be coming more and more often."

Greater community control over hunting and land use would also allow the Sicangu to reintroduce wild American bison, or buffalo, to the plains, and thereby promote a return to traditional food sources. A return to community stewardship might look like granting preference to tribal members when awarding hunting tags; a number of tribal members at roundtables expressed that they were unable to secure tags for the 2019 season. It could also include a return to the traditional walk hunt, which has been disturbed by trophy hunters in vehicles, as was mentioned by a community member and noted in section III of this report. The desired change in current hunting practices, as expressed by roundtable participants, is an area where Tribal Council could take action in response to community need. Repopulating the Rosebud plains with bison, rather than cattle, is an area where REDCO has already begun to take steps to secure land through Tribal Land Enterprises (TLE) for a buffalo sanctuary. Given

the community concern over the impact of sport hunting and other practices on the environment, deepening local knowledge on the importance of conservation through traditional knowledge is of ever-increasing importance.

While community education is important, **educating the youth was stressed at most roundtables as especially significant. A number of Elders recommended gardening, cooking, and food preservation classes for children, which is currently lacking in school curriculums.** YouTube was mentioned at the Antelope roundtable as a possible venue to provide educational videos to kids. Educating kids on healthy food choices is important not only for their health, but the health of their siblings and family as a whole. An Antelope community member made this point: *“You might want to focus on getting kids when they're about 8 or 9 years old, that's when they need to learn about making good choices... the kids are taking care of their little siblings... feeding their younger brothers and sisters* because their parents are off working or..., they might have addiction. So that age group, and I remember that from me, too, my mom was working and I came home from school, I was responsible for feeding my brother, after school that was the snack time. And I know there's a lot of kids the same way. So you get them at that age, talk to them about healthy choices, then they can have an apple, you want, you know whatever. Healthier food.”

Teaching kids healthier eating habits, gardening, and cooking skills in schools or Boys and Girls Clubs can translate over to changes at home. In an interview with Lisa McKnight, the cook for the Mission Boys and Girls Club, she revealed that encouraging kids to choose fruit over other sweets at the Club had led some students to continue making healthier food choices: “... I did get some good compliments from some parents that their kids did pick up the good eating habits, they're eating fruit more at home, so I was like, at least it's working.” Gardens at the Boys and Girls Clubs, which the FSI assisted with planting during the 2019 season, have also gotten kids excited about gardening as well as eating and sharing food they've grown themselves. Lisa mentioned that kids “...brought [cucumbers] up [to the kitchen] and asked if I could cut them up to pass them out to the other kids.”

While education is a vital component in changing food habits and health, it's unlikely that everybody on Rosebud will want or be able to become individually self-sufficient by producing all of their food themselves. **But while individual self-sufficiency may be inconvenient, promoting community self-sufficiency through food would bolster economic development on Rosebud as well as health and Lakota culture.** Community self-sufficiency can be achieved through markets for healthy and traditional foods, as was recommended by Elders. Creating a market for traditional foods is one step towards a sovereign economy. As mentioned in section IV, the FSI is currently working to determine the feasibility of a mobile grocery store on the reservation, which will promote food sovereignty by stocking products from local producers and entrepreneurs, including traditional foods.

Local producers and entrepreneurs at the Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market are already working to promote traditional and local foods and make them more accessible to the community. Market vendors have already expressed a desire for an extended market season, including year round

markets, with two-thirds of surveyed vendors directly expressing a desire for more markets. **Vendors also mentioned a desire for expanded opportunities through a tribal-focused food code that would promote tribal producer/entrepreneurs and Lakota values.** Vendors expressed the need for statistics on best-selling products to consider when expanding or planning their operations, and access to business loans and business development classes.

In addition to expanding opportunities for current producers, the FSI also hopes to create opportunities for new entrepreneurs. The paid 2019 garden incubator internships and paid Beginning Farmer Rancher internship program, which launched in November 2019, are one way of promoting small-scale farming and ranching enterprises on the reservation. These internships provide the skills and training needed to run a food production operation without any financial liability on the part of interns. **One arena the FSI has not yet entered is that of value-added goods. Given the abundant summer harvest from Keya Wakpala Gardens, the FSI is considering the feasibility of launching a commercial kitchen in order to produce value-added goods for market.** This would not only preserve produce beyond the current market season and thereby reduce waste, but would create jobs for community members. In order to sell at venues other than a farmers' market, goods must be produced in a certified commercial kitchen. **Having a community commercial kitchen on the Rosebud would provide opportunities for other entrepreneurs who lack access to a commercial kitchen to launch value-added goods for market distribution, including at local grocery stores.** This type of space could also be used for community food preservation or cooking classes.

Another gap identified in interviews with grocery stores was the connection between local producers/entrepreneurs and supermarkets. In interviews with Buche's, Turtle Creek Crossing Super Foods, Allstop, and Kary's convenience store in Parmelee, management all indicated that while they did not currently carry any products from tribal producers, they would be willing to do so if the item were something that would sell. **The main barrier cited by all venues was the lack of knowledge of what products were available; no tribal entrepreneurs had approached them to carry their goods.** In the future, the FSI may potentially have the ability to fill this gap by not only providing a facility for local producers to make their products, but by facilitating connections between local food retailers and tribal entrepreneurs. **The presence of local products in grocery stores would benefit the local economy and promote food sovereignty by way of making culturally relevant goods available to Sicangu Lakotas.**

While education and improved market access are both needed and desired by the community, there are reasons they have not been prioritized up until this point. **Immediate survival has been prioritized over long term needs by the Sicangu for so long, and it's difficult to change that mindset when immediate needs are still so strong.** As HeDog roundtable participants expressed, it's difficult to consider preserving food to last the winter when issues of housing and homelessness haven't been addressed. But in order to plan for the health of the next seven generations, long term needs must be addressed. In the words of a Rosebud roundtable participant, **"Council, our leadership, and also our membership, have to prioritize what it is we want... [to] make us strong again."** Regarding bringing back the buffalo, "It's a process we

haven't dedicated any resources to. We haven't taken any land, haven't given any money, or any human resources or regulations or nothing. We treat them like cows. And like cows, you have to make money... it shouldn't be that way for the buffalo. The buffalo, they provided for us years ago, so we should provide for them now.”

As we learned through discussions with community members, Elders, youth, tribal producers, grocery stores, and others involved in the Rosebud food system, food sovereignty is a complex topic that means different things to different people. The Food Sovereignty Initiative is working to address the needs of Rosebud residents by making fresh local produce affordable to the community, providing opportunities for tribal entrepreneurs and producers to contribute towards economic development, and providing educational opportunities and chances for cultural enrichment. There is still a great deal of work to do, but the Sicangu are a resilient people. In the words of Antelope community Elder Shoo Bear Bearshield, “... **it's time we started educating, not only our youth, our young adults, even the Elders, how to gather, remembering our old ways too, instilling it into them that everything we do we did with prayer. We prayed before we did something, we prayed during, and we prayed afterwards and gave thanks. We need to instill this back into our youth again in order for us to keep on surviving. Our great leaders, they lived by these ways, they sacrificed their lives for us, now it's our time to take our knowledge and start educating everybody else so we can continue to survive. Other people might disappear, we won't, we've been here this long, we'll always be here.**”

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