



THE FRUIT TREE PLANTING FOUNDATION

...PLANTING FRUIT TREES FOR A HEALTHY PLANET.

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Trees for Tribes: Revitalizing Native Foodways in Native American Communities

FTPF is an international non-profit charity on a mission to plant or encourage the planting of 18 billion edible fruit trees worldwide. Our programs benefit the environment and human health by strategically planting fruit and nut tree orchards where they will best serve communities for decades to follow. FTPF works across the nation with low income neighborhoods, homeless shelters, food banks, schools, and Native American communities to plant fruit trees as a means of providing easy access to fresh fruit nutrition, encourage healthy diets and lifestyles, and build community capacity to grow more food locally.

Hunger and food insecurity are a growing problem for families across the nation. For Native American families, the problem is particularly acute. Nearly 23% of American Indian households experience food insecurity -- the highest of any ethnic group in the U.S. The very youngest tribal members are most greatly affected by hunger and poverty—43 % of Native American children under the age of 5 are living in poverty.

Under these circumstances, maintaining a healthy diet can be extremely difficult. With poverty and food insecurity often come obesity and its attendant challenges, including heart disease and diabetes. Native Americans have twice the national average of diabetes type II and a 20% higher rate of heart disease. Addressing diet and lifestyle issues associated with these diseases is especially challenging on remote reservations, where there are often no full service grocery stores and families rely on convenience stores that offer highly processed foods along with commodity food distribution programs. Encouraging consumption of fresh foods by making it easier to access those foods for free or very little cost is one key to improving food security and health for very low-income Native Americans.

Food insecurity and obesity are also issues of cultural crisis. As can be seen in the terrace gardens and ancient fruit trees of the pueblos, the tribes of New Mexico have a cultural heritage of dry-land farming and orchard keeping. Many pueblo residents have lost all but the most superficial connection to their agricultural heritage. There are promising signs of renewal on the horizon, however, with the development of agricultural programs as tribal businesses, farm mentoring programs focusing on youth, and other projects oriented toward revitalizing the agricultural heritage of the pueblos.

FTPF has worked with Native American communities in the west for several years, re-introducing orchard-keeping to the tribes for which this was once a key component of their foodways. We plan to continue this work, but now turn our attention to the very poorest communities in the nation – the American Indian communities of the northern Great Plains. Through this project FTPF will work with tribal communities in South Dakota, Nebraska, and Oklahoma to create a network of fruit tree orchards to help feed tribal members, beautify their communities, and help re-connect tribal members to the skills of self-reliance.

Through Trees for Tribes, FTPF will consult with tribal partners to plan the orchards, provide the trees and irrigation (when requested), conduct celebratory planting events, teach community members how to plant and care for fruit trees, and provide student workshops at local schools. Each tribe will develop a plan to ensure equitable distribution of the harvest to those most in need.

FTPF's arborist will offer workshops for community focusing on tree care and pruning techniques so that community members may learn how to care for their new trees and then share this knowledge. We will offer follow-up support via telephone and email consultations with our arboricultural staff so that community orchard managers are supported as they learn how to care for their orchards and maximize the harvest available for their communities. To further encourage fruit tree agriculture and as an incentive for volunteerism, people who volunteer to plant the community orchards will be given mini-orchards to plant near their homes. This has been a very successful approach in previous FTPF tribal programs, generating enthusiasm for fruit trees and volunteer energy.

To engage tribal youth, FTPF staff will work with students to plant a school orchard at each pueblo and present age appropriate educational workshops at each school focusing on the importance of fruit for personal health of the value of trees for the environment. Older students will also participate in tree care workshops. Through this innovative approach, FTPF will put trees in the ground and food on the table in these remote communities, benefitting low-income Native families, helping to re-vitalize their agricultural heritage, and benefitting the environment through the planting of thousands of fruit trees.

FTPF hopes to plant in ten communities across three Native American reservations. The total budget for this program is \$35,000. We have received \$8,000 in grant funding toward this project, leaving \$27,000 to raise in private gifts.