



TRIBAL
HOME
VISITING

RESOURCE GUIDE | March 2026

Tribal Home Visiting Nutrition Resource Guide



Tribal Home Visiting Resource
Institute for Excellence (THRIVE),
Contract Number: 75ACF124C00017



Introduction

The Tribal Home Visiting Nutrition Resource Guide is a companion to the brief “Nurturing Body, Mind, and Spirit: How Tribal Home Visiting Supports Nutrition and Healthy Development.” Both resources were developed by the Tribal Home Visiting Resource Institute for Excellence (THRIVE) on behalf of the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families.

The brief includes:

- Information about food sovereignty and Native foodways of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) peoples.
- Research on the importance of nutrition during pregnancy, post-partum, and early childhood.
- Innovative practices of Tribal Home Visiting (THV) grant recipients to support healthy nutrition.
- Lessons learned to ensure families have access to healthy foods that nurture the body, mind, and spirit.

As a companion, this resource guide includes:

- A food sovereignty assessment tool.
- Resources to promote and support breastfeeding.
- Examples of how families can incorporate nutrition into everyday experiences with their children.
- Sample cookbooks and recipes from AI/AN communities.

The resources that follow do not represent an exhaustive list of all that is available and appropriate for programs supporting the health and well-being of families and young children.



Food Sovereignty



Food sovereignty represents the right of Tribal Nations and Tribal communities to determine the quantity, quality, production, distribution, and consumption of their own food systems.

In 2004, the First Nations Development Institute created the Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool. It was developed to provide a framework for Native communities to measure and assess food access, land use, and food policy. The tool was revised in 2015, incorporating lessons from Native communities around the world who used the first edition of the tool. It sets forth exercises that a community can engage in, from asset mapping to developing a plan for policies that can advance local control of food systems.

Guidance is offered on how to use the tool in a community setting to ensure widespread input.

The Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool, 2nd edition, can be accessed [here](#).

Resources to Promote and Support Breastfeeding

The Indian Health Service has compiled a [Breastfeeding Toolkit](#) offering an abundance of resources for providers about the benefits, initiation, and challenges regarding breastfeeding. These resources range from practical explanations of anatomy, equipment, and timelines to lifestyle and stress management guidance. The toolkit also includes information about formula feeding, labor and delivery, and rooming in. Each topic is addressed in a separate brief intended for provider education.

Additional resources and coalitions supporting breastfeeding in AI/AN communities include:

- [An Easy Guide to Breastfeeding for American Indian and Alaska Native Families](#)
- [Indigenous Milk Medicine Collective](#)
- [Native Breastfeeding Coalition of Wisconsin](#)
- [Navajo Breastfeeding Coalition](#)
- [Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Breastfeeding Coalition](#)

Activity Suggestions

Everyday activities present a golden opportunity for children to learn through play, experimentation, and discovery. It is well documented that talking, reading, singing, and counting with children supports their early language and literacy development. When these everyday activities are tied to food, the play becomes an active laboratory for children to learn about healthy nutrition, self-care, and well-being too.

There are many ways that AI/AN families can use food for learning. Before engaging in these activities, it is important to make sure that children are developmentally ready to safely participate—meaning they are not at risk of putting something in their mouth that would cause them to choke, lighting a fire or cooking over a stove, or other potentially harmful situations.

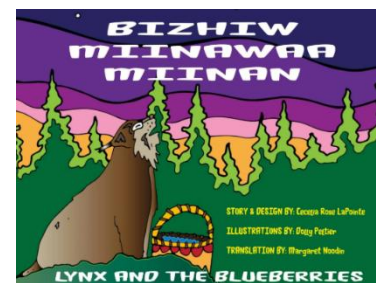
Reading and Storytelling

Families can read and tell stories to their children at any age—the sooner the better as it helps with early language and literacy development. Even before babies can speak, they are taking notice of sounds in the world around them. They begin to learn sound patterns and the meaning of commonly used words. When families ask children questions about what they see on the page of a book, what they think might come next in the story, or how they feel about the story, it provides an opportunity for children to be curious and develop early skills for critical thinking. Acting out the stories incorporates opportunities for movement which is also important for muscle development and integrating what they hear and do. Through reading and storytelling, families can share their history and culture and make meaning of both in child-friendly ways.

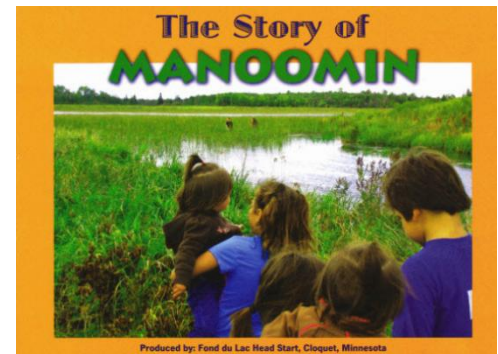
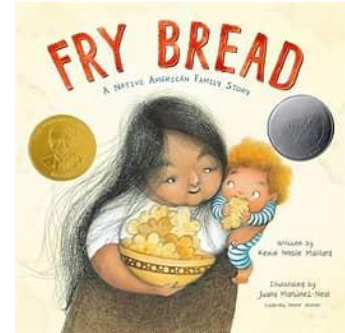


Some children's books with food themes include:

- [A Walk on the Tundra](#), by Rebecca Hainnu and Anna Ziegler
- [Bear Plants a Garden: Makwa Gitigaadaan Gitigaan](#), by Britta Brookes
- [Bizhiw Miinawaa Miinan: Lynx and the Blueberries](#), by Cecilia Rose LaPointe



- Black Bears and Blueberries ([Objiwe version](#)), ([Dakota version](#)), by Elizabeth Albert-Peacock
- [Black Bear Red Fox: Colors in Cree](#), by Julie Flett
- [Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story](#), by Kevin Noble Maillard
- [Gitige: She/he Gardens](#), by Fond du Lac
- [Mary's Wild Winter Fest](#), by Hannah Lindoff
- [Metis Like Me](#), by Tasha Hilderman
- [My First Book about Corn: Naadaa' Doo Nadaa' Ch'iyaan](#), by Native Child Dinetah
- [Raven Gets Tricked](#), by Andrea Fritz
- [The Story of Manoomin](#), by Fond du Lac Head Start
- [Waci! Dance!](#), by Sage Speidel
- [We are Water Protectors](#), by Carole Lindstrom



Counting, Sorting, and Ordering



The foundational skills for mastering mathematics—especially counting, sorting, and ordering—can be playfully introduced into everyday activities as young children gather natural artifacts in the outdoors (e.g., crops, seed pods, leaves, acorns) and with cooking tools in the home (e.g., spoons, pots, napkins, dish towels). Some simple activities that families can try with their children include the following:

- **Counting:** Together, parents and their children can gather crops from the garden. They can put them in a line and starting with the crop on the far left, begin counting until they reach the crop on the far right. With very young children, parents might start this activity with just two or three items. As they become more familiar with counting, the number of items can expand. A more advanced exercise would be to group the items in sets of 10. In this, children learn the names and order of numbers as well as one-to-one correspondence.
- **Sorting:** Together, parents and their children can gather a few different types of natural artifacts or Native foods (e.g., beans, squash, corn). They can sit together and sort the items, creating piles of each type. They can then use their counting skills and count the number of items in each pile. A more advanced activity would be to consider which pile

has more items than the other piles and then to count and compare the actual number. Again, putting the items in a row (e.g., one row of beans and a row below of squash) and counting from left to right will help them visualize the activity. In this, children learn about categorization and problem-solving.

- **Ordering (or sequencing):** Together, parents and their children can gather a few different types of tools from the kitchen (e.g., bowls, spoons, and napkins). Parents can talk aloud to model the development of a sequence (e.g., bowl, spoon, bowl, spoon, bowl, spoon). They can invite the child to join in and add to the sequence. Once two-step ordering has been mastered, they can then move on to a three-step ordering (e.g., bowl, spoon, napkin, bowl, spoon, napkin) and more. In this, children learn about pattern recognition, thinking, and memory skills.

Cooking

Young children can learn many things while helping in the kitchen with meal preparation. Of course, safety is paramount and needs to be front of mind for the adults who are present so that children do not get injured by using kitchen tools or engaging in activities for which they are not developmentally ready.

Even before children can talk and walk, families can have them nearby as they are preparing a meal. Adults can talk about what they are doing—scrubbing the dirt off the orange carrots, trimming the green stems, cutting the carrot into small pieces, putting the carrot pieces in a pot of water, heating the water on the stove, etc. They can pause to let the children feel the carrot, smell the carrot, bite into the carrot as appropriate.



Older children can be more active helpers, gathering ingredients, measuring ingredients (more opportunities to practice math!), mixing, and listening to the adult narrate the process of making a favorite meal.

In all these activities, families are helping to spark young children's curiosity through everyday activities that directly contribute to their early learning and development. And these present impressionable opportunities for families to integrate information about their culture, traditions, and Native foodways.

Cookbooks and Recipes

Below are examples of Native food practices, cookbooks, and recipes that THV grant recipients and participating families might find helpful.



[Recipes and Stories: Tribal Home Visiting Edition](#)

Recipes & Stories: Tribal Home Visiting Edition is a cookbook of Native recipes offering drinks, main and side dishes, soups, and desserts. The recipes found in this cookbook highlight Native ingredients and practices and were compiled through submissions to the Tribal Home Visiting Network by Tribal organizations and individuals.

[USDA Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiative Recipes and Video](#)

The USDA Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiative offers an array of resources including recipes and related instructional cooking videos, foraging guides, a handbook on the transition from cattle to bison, and information regarding regional seed-saving hubs. These resources have been developed in collaboration with Tribal partners and chefs, and are categorized by region on the program's website.

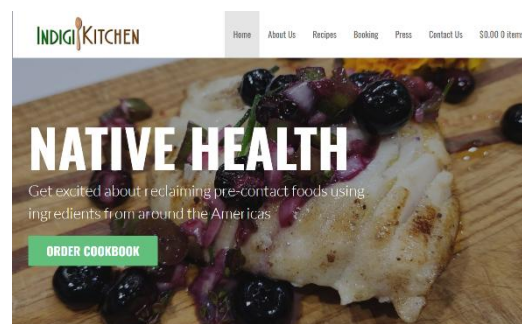


[North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems \(NATIFS\)](#)

NATIFS offers recipes, instructional videos, and local foraging information organized by region. The organization, founded by award-winning chef Sean Sherman, participates in the USDA Food Sovereignty Initiative to develop and share these recipes with the aim to increase awareness about incorporating Native foods and practices to build healthy diets.

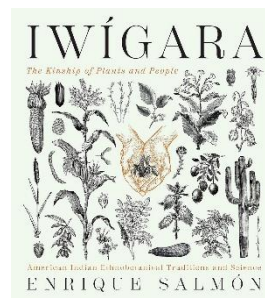
[Indigi Kitchen](#)

IndigiKitchen is an online recipe and instructional video resource created by Mariah Gladstone (Blackfeet, Cherokee). Gladstone's goal is to empower readers and listeners to engage with Native food systems to strengthen connections to their cultures and support healthy diets, bodies, and families. The website includes a variety of recipes alongside instructional cooking videos.



Iwígara: American Indian Ethnobotanical Traditions and Science

In this book, ethnobotanist Enrique Solomon explains the connections between people and plants. He outlines the health benefits of 80 plants that are revered by AI/AN people, sharing his knowledge about plant identification, harvest, benefits, and their role in traditional stories and myths.



In addition, the following cookbooks offer more Tribe- and region-specific recipes and information, celebrating Native ingredients and traditions.

- [Chimi Nu'am: Native California Foodways for the Contemporary Kitchen](#), by Sara Calvosa Olson
- [The Good Berry Cookbook: Harvesting and Cooking Wild Rice and Other Wild Foods](#), by Tashia Hart
- [Held by the Land Deck: 45 Ways to Use Indigenous Plants for Healings and Nourishment](#), by Leish Joseph
- [Ilittibaaimpa': Let's Eat Together! A Chickasaw Cookbook](#), by Vicki Penner and JoAnn Ellis
- [The Mitsitam Cafe Cookbook: Recipes from the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian](#), by Richard Hetzler
- [The Modern Navajo Kitchen: Homestyle Recipes That Celebrate the Flavors and Traditions of the Dine](#), by Alana Yazzie
- [Montana Indian Nations Sacred Plant Guide](#), by Montana Indian Nations
- [New Native Kitchen: Celebrating Modern Recipes of the American Indian](#), by Freddie Bitsoie
- [Original Local: Indigenous Foods, Stories, and Recipes from the Upper Midwest](#), by Heid E. Erdrich
- [Recovering our Ancestors' Gardens: Indigenous Recipes and Guide to Diet and Fitness](#), by Devon A. Mihesuah
- [Seed to Plate, Soil to Sky: Modern Plant-Based Recipes Using Native American Ingredients](#), by Lois Ellen Frank
- [The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen](#), by Sean Sherman
- [Tawaw: Progressive Indigenous Cuisine](#), by Shane M. Chartrand

Tribal Home Visiting Nutrition Resource Guide

Author

Deborah Roderick Stark, M.S.W.

Submitted to

Anne Bergan, Project Officer
Office of Early Childhood Development
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Contract Number: 75ACF124C00017

Prepared by

James Bell Associates
2000 15th Street North, Suite 100
Arlington, VA 22201
(703) 528-3230
www.jbassoc.com

Erica Roberts, Project Director

This report is in the public domain. Permission to reproduce is not necessary. Suggested citation: Roderick Stark, D., (2026). *Tribal Home Visiting nutrition resource guide*. Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Administration for Children and Families or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This report and other reports sponsored by ACF are available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/>.

