

# NATIFS

## PRESS KIT



### WHO WE ARE

North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NĀTIFS), founded by James Beard award winner [The Sioux Chef](#), is dedicated to addressing the economic and health crises affecting Native communities by re-establishing Native foodways. We imagine a new North American food system that generates wealth and improves health in Native communities through food-related enterprises.

### OUR MISSION

Our mission is to promote Indigenous foodways education and facilitate Indigenous food access.

### OUR VISION

Our vision is to rekindle and empower Indigenous food sovereignty through a thriving network of regional hubs that celebrate and elevate Indigenous culinary traditions.

# 1%

INDIGENOUS  
RESTAURANTS IN THE  
UNITED STATES

# 3%

INDIGENOUS FOOD  
MARKETS IN THE  
UNITED STATES

# 100%

INDIGENOUS LAND IN  
THE UNITED STATES

## WHAT WE DO

North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NĀTIFS) is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to addressing the economic and health crises affecting Native communities by re-establishing Native foodways. We imagine a new North American food system that generates wealth and improves health in Native communities through food-related enterprises.

The Indigenous Food Lab is an education and training center that serves as the heart of NATIFS' work establishing a new Indigenous food system that reintegrates Native foods and Indigenous-focused education into tribal communities across North America. We work to develop and support Indigenous kitchens and food enterprises in tribal communities, bringing cultural, nutritional, and economic revitalization across North America.

## HOW WE DO IT

With skills and support from the Indigenous Food Lab, trainees are equipped to open satellite food businesses in their tribal communities. By providing education and training that gives Native people access to healthy, local, Indigenous food, we can address serious issues of malnutrition, food-related illness, and economic impoverishment on tribal lands — we can also use our shared heritage to build bridges and build power within and between Native communities and our allies.

## THIS YEAR, AT A GLANCE

This past year was one of milestone successes for NATIFS. We launched our flagship Indigenous Food Lab Market, with a hot food bar, pantry supplies, organic produce, foraged items, and gifts – showcasing products from Indigenous makers. Many of our products are now available for mail order.

We acquired the James Beard Award-winning Minneapolis restaurant Owamni, fulfilling the original vision of founder Sean Sherman, and paving the way for expanded programming, jobs, markets for Indigenous goods, and more.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Reclaiming connection to tradition is a critical part of reversing the damage of colonialism and forced assimilation, and food is at the heart of this reclamation. The only reason this work is possible is because of our generous donors.

If you are unable to donate monetarily, lend a hand by volunteering with us, or by sharing our mission and vision on social media with your friends and family can make all the difference. Building a strong community is at the core of what we do.

If you want to get involved, you can follow us on social media, and sign up for our newsletter. We will share volunteer and other opportunities through those channels.

## IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY

- Name: NATIFS, pronounced *neetifs* or *nay-tihfs*. Sounds like “Natives”
- Capitalize the “I” in Indigenous and the “N” in Native
- “Indigenous peoples” not “Indigenous people” when referring to multiple distinct groups
- Always use present tense when talking about Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge

# HISTORY

Our work is driven by our mission: to promote Indigenous foodways education and facilitate Indigenous food access. NATIFS was founded by Chef Sean Sherman, the force behind The Sioux Chef, in 2017. NATIFS drives sustainable economic empowerment and prosperity in tribal areas through the development of a reimagined food system. Our work removes barriers to participation by assisting with training, planning, execution, and ongoing support to producers, food entrepreneurs, chefs, farmers, foragers, and others interested in growing an Indigenous food system.

We pivoted during the pandemic and the uprising following the murder of George Floyd, NATIFS received COVID relief funding to put together a hunger relief program. We provided Indigenous meals to the unhoused in encampments during the summer of 2020, and to our Native Elders living on tribal reservations throughout the state.

In 2020, NATIFS opened The Indigenous Food Lab in the Midtown Global Market on historic Lake Street in Minneapolis. Post-pandemic, we have been busy getting to work on the original vision of NATIFS. The Indigenous Food Lab is a professional Indigenous kitchen and training center covering all aspects of food service; research and development; Indigenous food identification, gathering, cultivation, and preparation; and all components of starting and running a successful culinary business based around Native traditions and Indigenous foods.

In 2021, construction on our Indigenous Food Lab Market, Spirit Kitchen, and Classroom expansion began in the Midtown Global Market. Around the same time, our founder, Sean Sherman, opened Owamni which has now become a James Beard-winning restaurant (and as of October 2023, it was officially made a part of NATIFS).

In the spring of 2023, the IFL Market and Spirit Kitchen opened. We offer high-quality Indigenous foods and products to our community. We work to broaden access to Native-made goods and present contemporary Indigenous offerings while empowering entrepreneurs to expand their markets. Customers can order hot food at the counter or purchase ingredients to take home and Indigenousize their own kitchens.

NATIFS works to cultivate the seeds of Indigenous heritage, nourish our people, and honor the land that sustains us. Our vision is to rekindle and empower Indigenous food sovereignty through a thriving network of regional hubs that celebrate and elevate Indigenous culinary traditions. With a deep commitment to healing, cultural reconnection, and economic empowerment, NATIFS envisions a future where every tribal community across the nation reclaims its food heritage, fosters sustainable local economies, and nurtures the overall well-being of its people.

## PHASE 1

### INDIGENOUS FOOD LAB

- Urban location
- An Indigenous market and eatery
- A Native foodways classroom
- Research and development to create more curriculum and educational resources

## PHASE 2

### REGIONAL ACCESS

- Work with tribal communities to help develop satellite Indigenous kitchens
- Make Indigenous foods accessible to areas that need it most

## PHASE 3

### NORTH AMERICAN VISION

- Replicate Indigenous Food Lab Centers which creates regional counterpoints for the development of Indigenous Food Access and Education
- Develop Tribal Community Indigenous Kitchens everywhere

# RECENT PRESS RELEASES

APRIL 2023

**TIME** has named Sean Sherman, award-winning chef and advocate for Indigenous foodways, to the **2023 TIME 100**, its annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world. [Read more.](#)

MAY 2023

North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (**NATIFS**) launches flagship **Indigenous Food Lab Market** featuring Indigenous foods and products. [Read more.](#)

JULY 2023

North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NATIFS) and its co-founder Chef Sean Sherman are hosting **Navajo chef and author Freddie J. Bitsoie as the inaugural chef-in-residence at the Indigenous Food Lab by NATIFS** in Minneapolis. [Read more.](#)

AUG 2023

North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NATIFS) announces **ethnobotanist and food sovereignty activist Linda Black Elk has joined as educational programming and community engagement leader.** [Read more.](#)

AUG 2023

Minneapolis nonprofit founded by accomplished [Indigenous Chef Sean Sherman](#) will be **sponsoring and supporting the Minnesota State Fair's Indigenous Peoples' Day.** [Read more.](#)

SEPT 2023

North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NATIFS) announces its **acquisition of the James Beard Award-winning Minneapolis restaurant Owamni.** [Read more.](#)

NOV 2023

North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (**NĀTIFS**) announces the launch of a second season of its **FDPIR (Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations) video series**, created in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to improve Indigenous health through Indigenous nutrition and to support the restoration of traditional Indigenous foodways for Native populations across the United States. The [video series](#) is part of the USDA's Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiative. [Read more.](#)



# AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

FOUNDER SEAN SHERMAN'S RECOGNITION FOR INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND DEDICATION TO THE MISSION

**2018**

James Beard Foundation Best American cookbook for "The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen"

**2022**

James Beard Foundation Best New Restaurant in America

**2023**

Julia Child Award Recipient

**2019**

James Beard Foundation Leadership Award

**2023**

Time 100 Most Influential People of 2023



## CONTACT



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## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please send an email inquiry to [media@natifs.org](mailto:media@natifs.org) with your request and due date and we will get back to you as soon as possible.