

The Minneapolis American Indian Center

Emergency Food Response for Community Elders

Shared by Chef Brian Yazzie

Background:

I am an indigenous chef from the Navajo Nation and currently residing in Saint Paul, Mn for the past seven years. I am a graduate of Saint Paul College's Culinary Arts 2006 (AAS Degree). When I graduated, I started my own business (Yazzie The Chef) as a traveling chef. I travel internationally with my fiancée, Danielle Polk, helping to bring awareness to the indigenous food cultures of North America. I provide catering, pop up dinners, cooking classes, demos, and presentations on indigenous foods. I am also a Summer resident chef at Dream of Wild Health farm in Hugo, MN. The farm is tribal owned and operated and dedicated to serving the Twin Cities native youth. Teaching the youth how to plant, harvest, and process ingredients, and the marketing values at farmers markets. My position on the farm is cooking with the youth daily and provide lunches for the students and staff.

How I got involved with feeding the elders:

After being self-isolated for two weeks and no signs of any symptoms, I felt like I needed to do something to help the native community of the Twin Cities, especially the elders during this time of pandemic. I called my friend, Ben Shendo, who is the executive chef at Gatherings Cafe (located inside the Minneapolis American Indian Center) and he connected me with the Indian center's director, Mary Lagarde. Mary informed me she had received a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield MN to start a meal service for the elders in the community. So with the grant, myself, Gatherings Cafe staff, and a couple of volunteers, we were able to purchase ingredients alongside utilizing ingredients from the cafe. We started serving the community elders on Tuesday, March 28. We are currently serving 175 elders and will most likely expand to feeding the native community in general.

Community and social media supporters: donation information

I started reaching out to chefs, friends, and medias through social media to ask for additional help with ingredients and funds. We received a great amount of support from local community businesses with face masks and chef friends across the country with dried ingredients, but we need more support as we are feeding 175 elders five times a day and soon to expand.

<p>Donations currently needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dried ingredients• Perishable foods• Frozen/fresh meats• Produce• Natural sweeteners• To Go Containers• Face Masks• Gloves• Aprons	<p>Delivery drop off:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minneapolis American Indian Center, 1530 E. Franklin Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55404 <p>Contact person: Chef Brian Yazzie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Email: brian@yazziethchef.com• Cellphone: (651)724-3553 <p>Monetary Funds can be made through paypal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paypal: paypal.me/yazziethcook
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From Blue Cross Blue Shield:

In response to Covid-19, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Center for Prevention reached out to the Minneapolis American Indian Center regarding the capacity to help the elders in the community with food. The Minneapolis American Indian Center's Gatherings Café staff, along with community volunteers, have been able to prepare and deliver one-hundred lunches to the elders living at the Little Earth of United Tribes Housing Development and Bii Di Gain housing Mondays – Fridays. The meals include healthier Indigenous foods, which have included wild rice and bison. This food service began on Tuesday, March 24th, 2020, and will continue through May 2020. Funding has been provided for this Emergency Food Response for Community Elders from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Center for Prevention.

-Mary LaGarde, Executive Director

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation has made a grant to the Minneapolis American Indian Center to support their emergency food programs, as we know that this crisis is particularly impacting communities who were already experiencing food insecurity and other inequities.

The mission of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation is to make a healthy difference in communities by advancing health equity and improving the conditions where people live, learn, work and play.

-Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation