

Tribe hosts Traditional Foods Conference, stickball game is a highlight

By Sharla Robinson, Healthy Traditions Project Coordinator

In late February, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians hosted a Traditional Foods Conference where Tribal representatives from across the U.S. (see map, below right) came together for cultural sharing and discussion on revitalizing traditional food cultures within our communities.

The Siletz Tribe joined the traditional foods movement two years ago by starting a project called Healthy Traditions. This project seeks to improve the health of Siletz Tribal members through educational activities that promote the use of traditional foods through hunting, gathering, gardening, cooking, food preservation and protecting our natural resources.

The conference was a wonderful opportunity for the Healthy Traditions team to learn more about traditional foods programs in other Tribal communities.

One of the Tribal groups, Tohono O'odham Community Action from Arizona, showed a poster with community goals drafted about 10 years ago. Today, many of these visions have been accomplished, such as opening a traditional foods café and serving traditional foods in their school one day per week. It was inspiring to see the success of other traditional foods projects that have been years in the making.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians started a Summer Youth Gardeners Project modeled after the Food Project in Boston. They worked with volunteers and paid youth for eight weeks over the summer. They donated half and sold half of their harvest, which taught youth responsibility and community service. One youth made a short video story about his experience learning to grow food.

These are the types of projects that can be started by volunteers. Healthy Traditions would like to support any community members excited about doing projects like these.

The next conference will be held later this year, hosted by the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians in Minnesota. They said they were so impressed with our Tribe, our good food and hosting, that they had already started calling home to start planning.

Compliments go to Frank Aspria for his leadership as the head chef for the event and to the hard-working kitchen volunteers – Miguel Bransford, Lincoln Lewelling, Nora Williams, Sharon Mason, Verdene McGuire, Adrienne Crookes, Rose Bremner and Cecilia Tolentino. The

food staff received a well-deserved standing ovation from conference attendees for their hard work and wonderful hosting.

Healthy Traditions welcomes Tribal members to its monthly meetings where we discuss upcoming events and ideas for new projects. We plan events for gathering, cooking, canning, smoking, gardening, fishing, hunting and more.

Carpooling is available from the area offices. Our next meeting will be held April 10 from 1-2:30 p.m. at the Siletz Community Health Clinic.

For more information, please contact me at 541-444-9627; 800-648-0449, ext. 1627; or sharlar@ctsi.nsn.us.

Traditional games a hit

While attending the Traditional Foods Conference, members of the Cherokee Nation offered to teach their traditional game of Cherokee Stickball. Siletz Tribal member Max Hoover designed and built an indoor installation for the game.

Stickball resembles the modern European game of lacrosse. Seven points are scored when the ball strikes a wooden fish or ball on the top of a pole and two points are awarded when the ball strikes the pole. Male players use a pair of the sticks and female players use their bare hands.

The Siletz Royalty participated by setting their crowns safely aside so they could run and dogpile the ball when necessary. Little Miss Siletz Jocelyn Hernandez ran laps around everyone.

As the game went on, players got more sophisticated in their strategy with sneak passes and fake shooting.

"Everyone had smiles on their faces ... so even if they weren't chasing around the floor, they were getting the health benefits through laughter," said Christy Hurt, who works in the Tribe's Indian Child Welfare department.

The teams were neck and neck throughout the game. Selene Rilatos scored the winning point for the girls' team. She sent an e-mail the next day saying, "Thx for the awesome evening ... that was such a fun time! And I got outta bed like a champ – just my usual gramma style lol."

About 40 people attended and the Siletz Boosters made a gracious donation of free food for the participants.

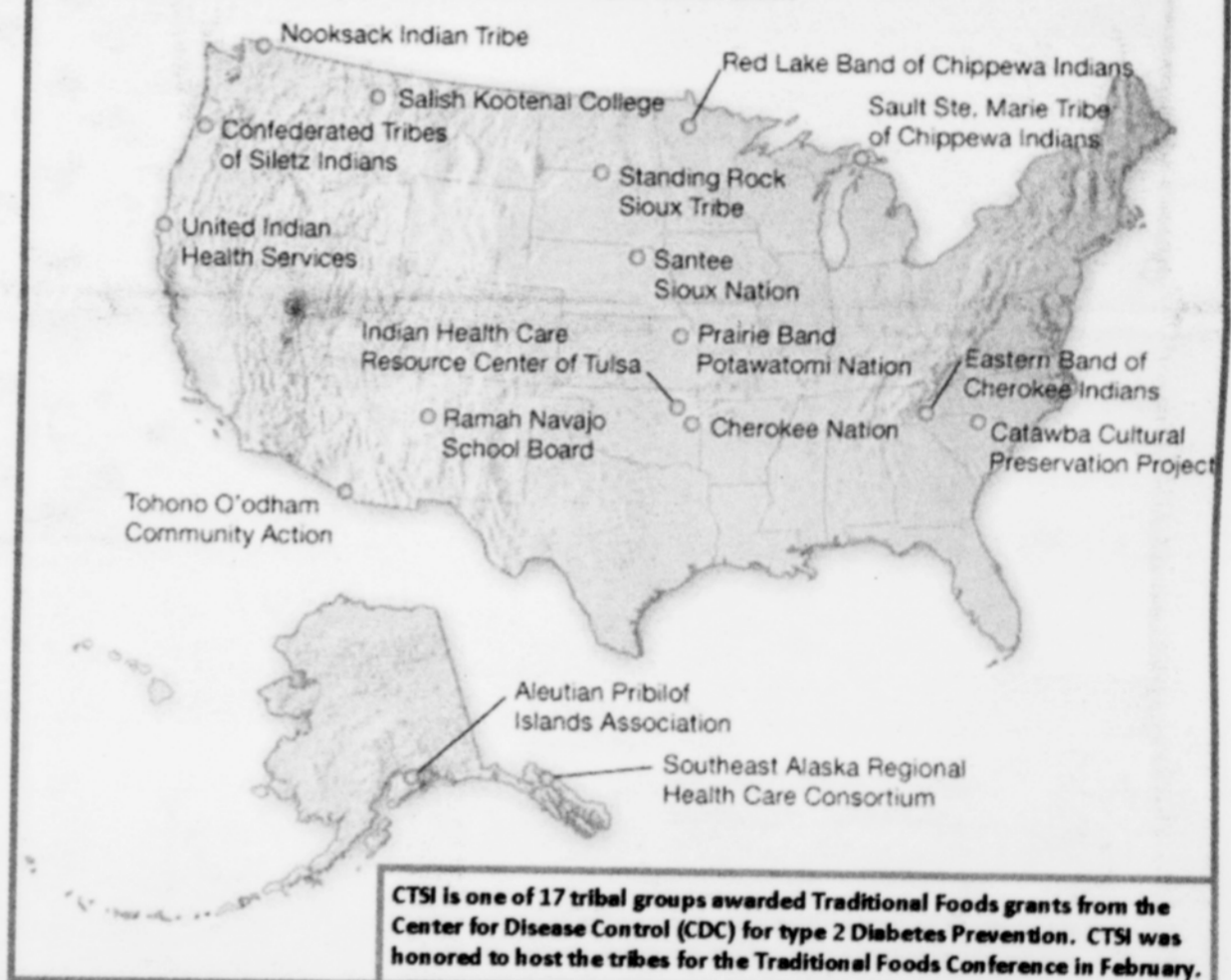
After the event, several people suggested we do more traditional games in the future and perhaps start doing the traditional Siletz game of shinney, also known as "koho," which is similar to field hockey.



Photo by Natasha Kavanaugh

Junior Miss Siletz Clarinda Black races to the ball for the women's team during the stickball game. The traditional game of Cherokee Stickball requires the male players to use a pair of sticks and the female players to use their bare hands.

Traditional Foods Partners across the U.S.



Elders Council Meeting

April 14 • 1-4 p.m.

Chinook Winds Golf Resort

For more details, contact Felicia Carmona at 800-922-1399, ext. 1225; 541-444-8225; or feliciac@ctsi.nsn.us

