

Edenfield elected vice chair of national committee for US Treasury Department

Sharon Edenfield, Tribal administrative manager and secretary of the Siletz Tribal Council, has been elected vice chairman of the Treasury Tribal Advisory Committee (TTAC).

Edenfield was originally appointed to TTAC by Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden in 2019.

At the meeting on Oct. 26, the following individuals, along with Edenfield, were elected to the following positions:

- Chairman W. Ron Allen (Jamestown S’Klallam), chairman of TTAC

- Jean Swift (Mashantucket Pequot). co-chair for the TTAC Subcommittee on Dual Taxation
- Will Micklin (Tlingit Haida) and Stephanie Williams (Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas), co-chairs for the TTAC Subcommittee on Tribal Pensions

They were joined at the meeting by U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen for opening remarks and Treasurer

of the United States, Chief Lynn Malerba (Mohegan), for the duration of the meeting. Key federal partners from various offices within Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service were also represented at the meeting.

Background for TTAC

The Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-168) was signed into law by the president in September 2014 and required the establishment of

a seven-member TTAC. The committee members have a broad mandate to “advise the secretary on matters relating to the taxation of Indians.”

Among the duties, the TTAC helps establish training and education programs for Internal Revenue Service field agents who work with Tribal governments and Tribal finance professionals. NAFOA (Native American Finance Officers Association) serves as a supporting organization for TTAC.

Cultural strategies can support your family’s health with traditional food ways

By Nancy Ludwig, MS, RDN, LD, Head Start Consulting Nutritionist

As part of my role as a consultant nutritionist to Siletz Tribal Head Start, I offer information for families. This segment takes another look at the health benefits of traditional food ways.

I took a dive into this favorite topic of mine in a new way. I realized that traditional diet means many things and is not consistent throughout the world. Traditional eating has been related to positive health outcomes and sustainability. There is no consensus, however, on what constitutes traditional and modern eating.

It is clear there are many inequities that contribute to current-day health disparities. Rather than dwelling there, I hope to highlight the strengths and benefits of Indigenous ancestry as we move forward striving for health.

The shift from traditional to modern eating has become more prevalent in scholarly literature with the increasing incidence of chronic diseases and obesity. The popular author, Michael Pollan, stated in his book *Food Rules* that “people who eat according to the rules of a traditional food culture are generally healthier than those of us eating a modern Western diet of processed foods”. One of his rules for eating wisely was “Regard nontraditional foods with skepticism.” Of course, it isn’t quite this simple.

Diet means the kinds of food a person, animal or community habitually eats. “Traditional food ways” is a participatory tool that captures the whole range of local foods of a community, how food is sourced in the landscape, prepared and consumed, and the roles of the household and community members involved.

In addition to ancestry, traditional food ways vary with available food resources, climate, geography and more. My fascination is that these factors actually mean the composition and types of foods consumed in the overall diets vary across the world. Furthermore, the lack of consensus when using the terms modern vs. traditional may be partially due to how we characterize time.

My focus in past writing has been on the composition of the foods that were indigenous to this Northwest region. The Salish Food Mound, described by Drs. Korn and Ryser, is composed of 33% leafy greens, berries and fruits; 45% meat, fish and fowl; 20% fats and fish oils; and 2% roots and sweets.

From there I’ve focused on no grains (no flour, no cereal, no bread), no dairy (no milk, no cheese, no yogurt, no sour cream, no ice cream), very little sweets or starchy vegetables, only fruits in season and literally no refined sugar. There are many modern-day dietary recommendations that are consistent with this, such as paleo, autoimmune-paleo, many versions and combinations of gluten- and/or grain-free plus dairy-free.

Traditional diets in Alaska, Yukon Territory and Canada include more fats and fewer vegetables in the cold climates. These work well in the right settings and climates. There are also modern-day dietary recommendations that are consistent with this, such as the ketogenic diet.

The Southwest regions of the U.S. and South America tend to include more corn and legumes that are not found in the traditional practices of the Northwest Salish region. These diets work well in the warmer climates and growing conditions. Once again, many modern-day dietary recommendations are consistent with this, such as vegetarian, plant-based diets with varying degrees of animal-based proteins, and small amounts of cheese. The well-known Mediterranean diet is another example.

When exploring traditional foods, I even looked at Biblical references to foods. This blew my mind a bit as these references focused on gluten-containing grains, fasting and additional concepts. This is certainly a complex topic.

Because there are so many variable recommendations all around the world, it may be difficult to figure out what is best for you. All diet recommendations are for the purpose of health or treatment of chronic illness. I believe that success is often found in the framework of examining each person’s ancestral heritage, or mix of heritage, and whether you live in that ancestral area and/or climate.

Because there are so many factors, this approach requires experimentation. These factors cannot be reduced to environment or possible genetics via heritage. It is necessary to consider physical, emotional and spiritual well-being related to culture.

This must all be overlayed with where you live and the locally available food sources due to the additional benefits to eating what grows well locally (not the same as adapting to local unhealthy eating practices).

I appreciate that Indigenous cultures are faced with difficult disparities, yet at the same time unique strengths. I reviewed

a series of government articles focused on Indigenous health disparities with proposed guidance.

Often the guidance is on the value of early intervention, beginning prenatally with a mother’s first pregnancy and extending throughout the first years of life and beyond, as one of the surest ways to begin to address past centuries of neglect and improve the prospects of American Indian and Alaska Native children in this century.

Additional articles reviewed and summarized health disparities, stating that American Indians and Alaska Natives continue to die at higher rates than other Americans in many categories, including from chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, diabetes mellitus, unintentional injuries, assault/homicide, intentional self-harm/suicide and chronic lower respiratory diseases.

I was moved by a CDC (Centers for Disease Control) article that identified Tribal issues federal agencies often fail to understand or support with federal grants and resources. In another CDC document titled “CDC and Indian Country Working Together,” three convenings were described with a group of Tribal leaders and members knowledgeable about Tribal practices that promote physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. The purpose was to find practices that CDC could support with grant funding.

Seven strategies that promote health and well-being were developed and CDC stated they will use these strategies and associated practices in future funding opportunity announcements (FOAs) to support Tribes and Tribal organizations in implementing practices that keep people healthy and well.

Seven strategies that promote health and well-being

- Family and community activities that connect cultural teachings to health and wellness
- Seasonal cultural and traditional practices that support health and wellness
- Social and cultural activities that promote community wellness
- Tribal, intertribal, governmental and non-governmental collaborations that strengthen well-being
- Intergenerational learning opportunities that support well-being and resilience
- Cultural teachings and practices about traditional healthy foods to promote health, sustenance and sustainability
- Traditional and contemporary physical activities that strengthen well-being

As I look at these seven Tribal strategies, I see that we must look back in order to look forward. Cultural teachings, activities and traditional practices have fostered resilience. All seven strategies look back to a common foundation and move forward in community with activities to foster learning and support health.

One of the comments shared about the convenings included this: “There is misunderstanding of the practices of Natives, so we’re often on the negative side. The Tribal convenings were geared toward having the government understand. Some traditional practices are difficult to measure in the way that things are measured, but there needs to be trust that we know what we’re doing.”

My hope is that all health programs, including Siletz Tribal Head Start, can collaborate to connect intergenerational family and community, seasons, cultural and social activities to support health, well-being and resilience.

Siletz Tribal Head Start offers nutritional support at no cost to Head Start families. This usually occurs over the telephone. If you have nutrition concerns about your Head Start child or want to discuss family nutrition concerns, please contact your teacher or the director and ask to speak to the nutritionist.

Supporting resources (links)

- Understanding Traditional and Modern Eating: <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-7844-4>
- Traditional Foods, Wellness in Native America <https://americanindianinstitute.wordpress.com/2012/07/16/traditional-foods-part-1/>
- Indian Health Disparities, Fact Sheets, 2-pages https://www.ihs.gov/sites/newsroom/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/fact-sheets/Disparities.pdf
- Poverty and Health Disparities for American Indian and Alaska Native Children: Current Knowledge and Future Prospects <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2567901/>
- Chronic Disease Resources for Tribal Health <https://www.cdc.gov/tribal/data-resources/information/chronic-diseases.html#print>
- CDC and Indian Country Working Together, pages 28-29 of 36 pages <https://www.cdc.gov/tribal/documents/resources/CDC-indian-country.pdf>