

# The Community of the Shinnecock Nation Encourages a Healthy Lifestyle

*Over the last 4 years the Shinnecock Indian Nation has been partnering with Stony Brook Medicine and Western Suffolk BOCES under Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), and Eat Smart New York, a Cornell Cooperative Extension program, to promote the health of its community members through improved access to healthy, affordable foods and beverages and increased opportunities for physical activity. Leaders from multiple departments of the Nation, including the Community Health Workers, Transportation Department, Senior Center, Cultural Department and Youth Center, have been making strides to support community members in adopting healthy lifestyles.*

## Promoting nutrition standards

In the years past, the Shinnecock Nation—with the assistance and support of CHSC, Eat Smart NY and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) program Good Health & Wellness in Indian Country—has evaluated and implemented health promoting interventions such as conducting worksite wellness events, tending to the community garden, initiating a wellness committee and drafting nutrition guidelines for staff meetings and community events. These initiatives have provided staff and community members with the opportunity to address nutrition issues and inactivity by developing healthful eating strategies and providing opportunities for increasing physical activity.

These initiatives also led to a collective effort of community members to incorporate healthy

eating habits during meetings and community events. While the *Healthy Events Guidelines* are still being finalized, community members have already begun implementing these techniques by preparing smaller portions of traditional food items such as fry bread and succotash during community potluck events. Friendly competitions on how to modify traditional recipes to include healthier ingredients and less fat and sugar have also ensued.

It is reported that water is the most popular beverage supplied at all events. Water consumption has been further encouraged with the purchase of a water station in the community center where members can fill up their reusable water bottles.

## Everyone walks



**A colorful crosswalk**

To help provide increased opportunities for physical activity, community members have been

given walking maps of the community center. A larger poster of the walking map hangs on the wall of the center. To assist with achieving personal physical activity goals, the walking maps include the number of laps and correlated steps/miles for personal tracking. Community members have received education on the importance of incorporating physical activity into their daily lives; however, their safety comes first leading us to the newest project that the community has been working on, Complete Streets.

## The Church Street Crosswalk Project

Nestled in the middle of the Shinnecock Indian Reservation is an array of buildings that provide essential health, social and educational services to the community. Church Street, where they all intersect and connect, has a dangerous blind curve that makes it unsafe and challenging to cross. Cars tend to travel at high speeds and there are no crosswalks available, leaving community members feeling unsafe to walk to and from these buildings that are right across the street

Under the CHSC program is a Complete Streets component that aims to ensure streets are safe and accessible for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists of all ages and abilities.

Working together, the CHSC Community Coordinator and the Shinnecock Nation Transportation Coordinator applied for and were awarded an America Walks Community Change Grant for \$1,500 to support what has been dubbed the Church Street Crosswalk Project. Funding will be used to purchase signs and install a crosswalk.

***“We are hopeful that the safety improvements will encourage folks to walk back and forth between the buildings and increase their physical activity.”*** Lauryn Randall, Shinnecock Transportation Coordinator

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In an effort to increase awareness and education about passenger and pedestrian safety the Shinnecock Transportation Department, CHSC, Eat Smart NY and the Automobile Association of America (AAA) hosted a pop-up event. Children from the community participated in an AAA presentation and helped map out the walking path to the crosswalk.

## Next steps

The Nation will work with Vision Long Island, a subcontractor on the CHSC program, to utilize a Walkability Checklist tool provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and conduct a traffic and pedestrian safety assessment.



**Children take part in safety presentation**

The Shinnecock Nation has been striving to encourage community members to live their healthiest lives possible. It is exciting to see these great initiatives being implemented, and we look forward to continuing to work in collaboration.

## To learn more about our work:

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## Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

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