

Our Cultures Are Our Source of Health

[Wes Studi] At the turn of the last century, Native people lived off the land, hunting, fishing, gathering, and farming. As times changed, our way of life changed.

[Men shout, rattle sticks]

Many of us were not as physically active as we used to be. Our land was not used to grow, gather, and hunt traditional foods, as in the past.

The changes to our culture have had a devastating impact.

[Men shout, rattle sticks]

Our tribal and reservation communities have suffered a dramatic rise in illness from a dangerous disease - type 2 diabetes.

[Players shout]

Today, Native American communities are on the move. Traditional foods and physical activity are a way to talk about health - our health - based on our traditions.

[Man] Don't let her up now. Sticks up! Sticks up! Yeah! Oh!

[Players shout, rattle sticks]

[Blossom] Oh. Hey, it's Wes.

[Man] Hey, Wes!

[Man #2] Hey, Wes!

[Man] Play with us!

[Wes Studi] Let's see.

[Man] Hey, Wes!

[Blossom] We women are running them into the ground, Wes. They need your skills out there.

[Wes Studi] I could use the exercise, but no, no, no, no.

[Malcolm] Don't worry, Studi. We made the pole short. I bet you score quick today.

[Malcolm laughs]

[Studi laughs]

[Wes Studi] Okay, alright. You're on.

[Blossom laughs]

[Players shout, rattle sticks]

[Malcolm] Looks like a pretty young bunch, Wes.

[Wes Studi] Yeah. Well, that'll be their downfall.

[Malcolm laughs]

[Players cheer]

[Players shout, rattle sticks]

[Studi Laughs]

[Studi Grunts]

[Players cheer]

[Wes Studi] Ha! Hey! The old man's still got it, Blossom! Ha! You're in trouble now!

[Players laugh]

[Glenda] We have wonderful food for everybody.

[Wes Studi] Looks healthy. Looks like it might taste good, too.

[Malcolm] We've prepared some of our traditional food to honor what you plan to share with us today.

[Wes Studi] And I am honored to have been invited to share your table, share your story for all the nations to hear - a story about how a return to traditional foods, healthy traditional foods, and an active lifestyle can help prevent obesity and type 2 diabetes - or control them.

[Malcolm] Everybody knows somebody who has diabetes, Wes.

[Wes Studi] Mm. Listen to our elders.

[Glenda] Mm-hmm.

[Wes Studi] They can tell a story of a time not 60 years ago when there was no word for diabetes in our language.

[Glenda] Hm.

[Wes Studi] The illness was so rare. We all know that our way of life was changed throughout history in ways that created the traumas and illnesses that we suffer from today. Since the 1950s, Native families have relied more and more on processed foods, high in sugar and fat and low in fiber.

[Blossom] We teach the children to call them "sometimes foods." You can only have them sometimes.

[Wes Studi] Yes. But this all looks healthy.

[Glenda] It's our own homegrown vegetables and fruits. And, as you know, they taste good, too.

[Wes Studi] Oh, yeah.

[Glenda] I hope you all enjoy.

[Jimmy] Uh, Mr. Studi? I'm Jimmy. In school, my teacher says that we should eat healthy foods, drink water, and be active.

[Wes Studi] Well, you heard what we all need to hear. Yeah. Make wise choices. Follow your traditions. And I know, from listening to your words, that we have the power to prevent type 2 diabetes and obesity in our communities. Ah. Wonderful! We have salmon, corn, squash, beans. Ahh!

[Glenda] The three sisters.

[Wes Studi] Yeah.

[Glenda] We have tepary beans from the Southwest sisters, as well. And really there's food here from all four directions. Lots of different kinds of food from many different tribes from all over the country, huh?

[Wes Studi] Don't forget the kanuchi.

[Laughter]

[Malcolm] You bet. And from our brothers and sisters in the Plains...

[Wes Studi] We have the traditional buffalo, some deer. Nice. I like them both. They're good for you, too.

[Malcolm] You know, Wes, with a good, healthy diet, you may be able to help prevent diabetes.

[Wes Studi] Well, we all know that this disease is a growing problem, not only across our country, but around the world. In Native nations, our young people are at a greater risk for type 2 diabetes than young people in general.

[Blossom] That's a problem.

[Wes Studi] Yes. Many things came together to create this problem. Thousands of years ago, Native peoples prevented this disease by harvesting and eating traditional foods. So we know how to prevent obesity and type 2 diabetes. We need our elders, the voices of our elders, along with our young people, to speak out.

[Blossom] I often tell people to exercise and eat healthy.

[Wes Studi] Well, we should eat healthy, then, before my story and our food gets colder.

[Laughter]

[Malcolm] I'd like to have our honored guest give our blessing. Wes?

[Wes Studi] I want to honor your table, our friends, in our tradition. Provider, who has given all, from the appearing way to the east, the cold way to the north, and the disappearing way to the west, and the warm way to the south, you have spoken to us, and we have spoken to you...

[Malcolm] Better get some of this venison. I haven't gotten to this yet.

[Wes Studi] This is some of the best fish ever.

[Malcolm] Really? The salmon? Oh, yeah. I might need some of that.

[Wes Studi] Little bit of green. Little bit of green.

[Wes Studi] Health is our life in balance. Native people are on the move to bring back traditional, healthy foods and physical activity to help prevent type 2 diabetes. For our health and the health of our future generations, follow our rich traditions. Eat healthy. Be active. Make wise choices. I know we have the power. Our people and cultures hold the answers. We will return to our life in balance.