

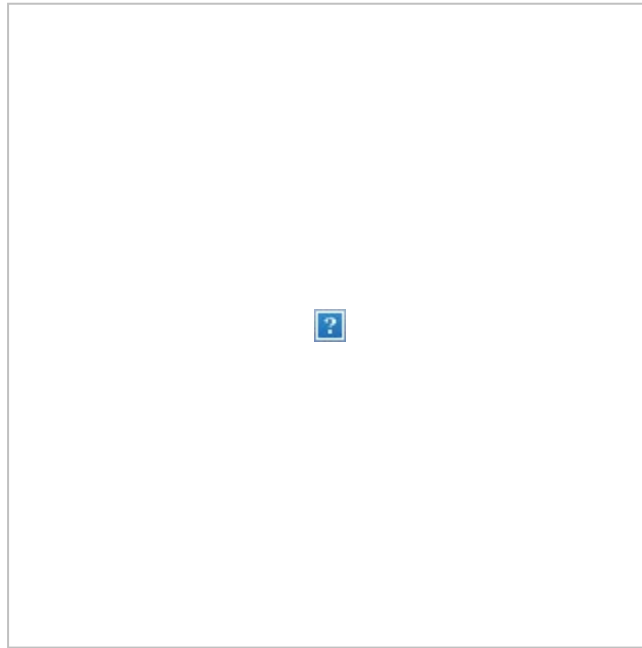
**From:** [Institute of Child Nutrition](#)  
**To:** [Chris Aloia](#)  
**Subject:** December 2021 Native American Advisory Committee Newsletter  
**Date:** Monday, December 13, 2021 11:58:42 AM

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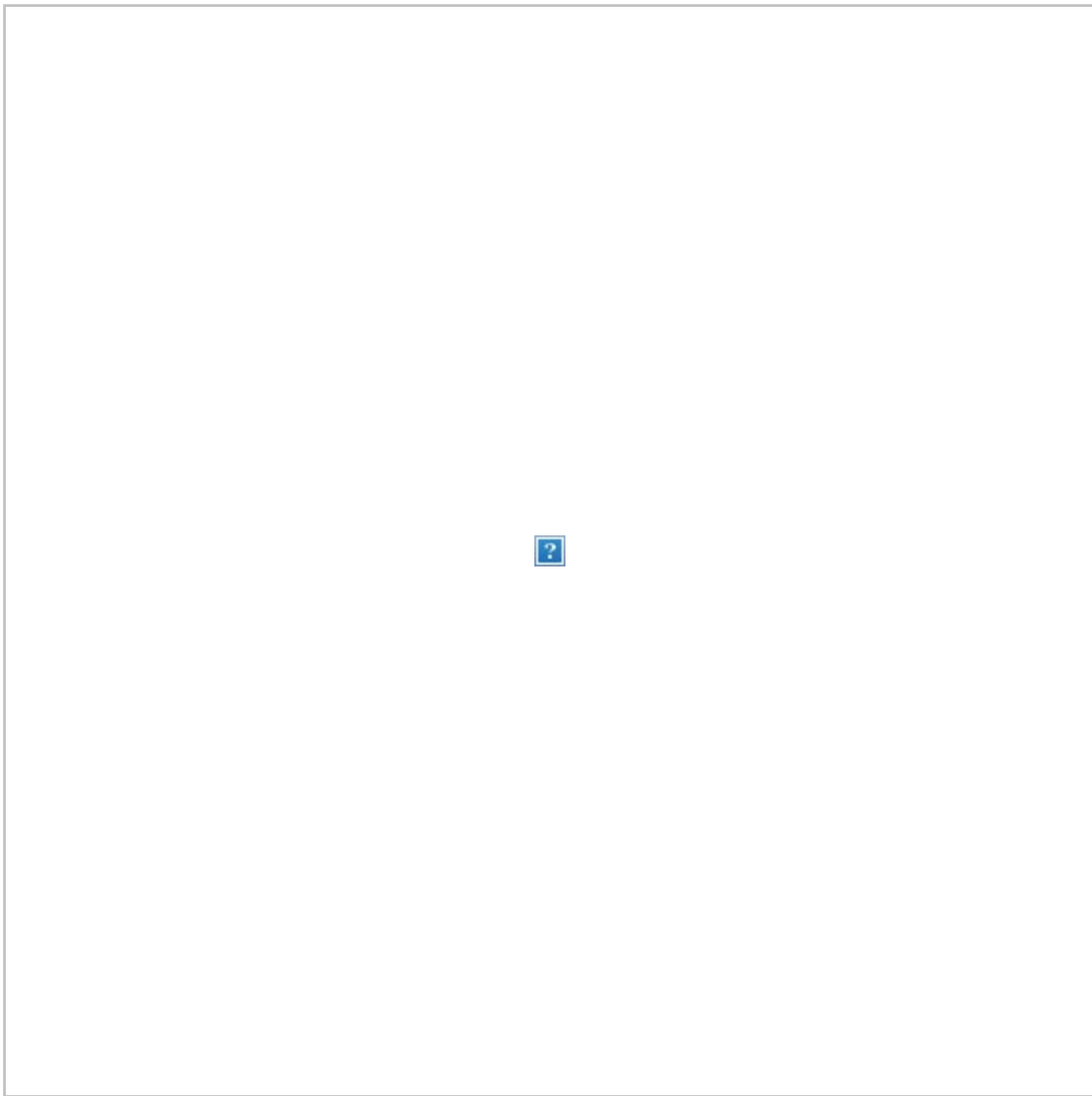
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## Native American Advisory Committee Newsletter

The NAAC newsletter is intended to update and inform ICN's Native American Advisory Committee, USDA, and partners of ICN's accomplishments and activities. It also features NAAC members to enhance relationships among the committee and provide recognition for each members' accomplishments.

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*Figure 1: Word cloud art piece created from NAAC Members' responses on what you love about the Fall/Winter season*

ICN looks forward to ending the year strong. We will conduct the last hangout on December 15, 2021. We are also submitting an abstract to the Southern Tribal Plains Public Health Conference scheduled for 2022. ICN's Applied Research Division is finishing the Needs Assessment Study interviews and preparing for a workgroup meeting this Spring. The University will be closed December 22, 2021 through January 2, 2022. We wish each member a Happy Holidays!

This edition of the newsletter:

- NAAC Member reflections
- Thanks to NAAC Members
- Year-end accomplishments of the Native American Initiative

- Upcoming NAAC Hangout presenter
  - Report on conference activities
- 

## NAAC Reflections

As the calendar ushered out the fall and welcomed in the winter season, ICN reached out to the NAAC members to reflect what the change in season means to each one. Thank you to all who shared your thoughts with us.

*“I love to carve pumpkins - still at 59 years of age! Roasting the pumpkin seeds is wonderful! Also, fresh cranberries are in the grocery stores. I make a dish called Cranberry Fluff just like my grand-mommy did. It’s mostly cranberries and tart apples with pecans we would pick up on their farm in rural Oklahoma.” Sarah Miracle*

*“A couple of things I love about the new season are the changing colors of the leaves on the trees, balloons and the smell of green chili in the air, and the excitement my kids have for the holidays really warms my heart.” Jerome Armjio*

*“I love making soup and cross country skiing in the fall/winter around here.” Andrea Alma*

*“I love running in the cool, crisp air and among the beautiful fall colors.” Samia Hamdan*

*“What can I say about The Fall season in Mississippi?*

*The colors of fall are beginning to appear in gorgeous hues of red/orange/yellow. The days are cool enough now that hot soup and cornbread make an inviting meal at night in front of the fireplace. The hot and humid land that is Mississippi has been replaced by a crispness in the air that compels us to slow down, take a deep breath, and be thankful for the blessings of the changing seasons.” Connie Black*

*“And, of course, in the South, there is always.....FOOTBALL....and all the joy, fun, and camaraderie that surrounds it!! GO BULLDOGS!!!!” Connie Black*

*“I love to see the leaves changing colors once the temperatures begin to cool down. The gold, red, orange, brown and yellow hues are so beautiful - truly a masterpiece*

*designed from above! I also enjoy the Fall/Winter season because growing up, it signified a time when family and friends would come together to enjoy a meal made with love or travel together to a central location to celebrate just being together.” Ebony James*

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## A Big Thank You to All NAAC Members

Thank you for contributing so much of your time! Many of the amazing activities ICN has accomplished this year were a direct result of your involvement. We appreciate it all, from hosting Chris in Alaska, to sharing about your lifestyles in the NAAC meeting and Hangouts, to connecting us with your contacts, and allowing us to visit with you in-person. You have given us important information and insights to help us better understand the challenges in Native American School Nutrition. We appreciate your guidance and the different perspectives each of you bring to this initiative. ICN looks forward to many future collaborations with you. Thank you!

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## The Native American Initiative Year-End Accomplishments

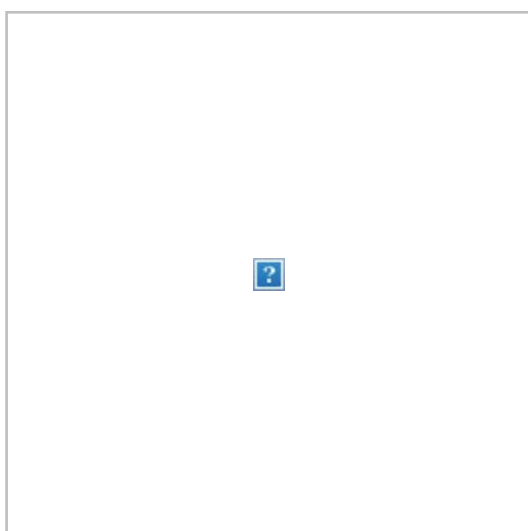
Despite the challenges of COVID-19, this year has been productive for ICN's Native American Initiative. Here are a few of our accomplishments:

- Sent out quarterly newsletters
  - Launched the NAAC Hangout
  - Conducted site visits in Alaska and New Mexico
  - Conducted Needs Assessment interviews
  - Began developing collaborations with Southern Plains Tribal Health Board and Washington University
  - Presented at the National Indian and Native American WIC Conference
  - Disseminated boxes of ICN educational materials and food safety kits to school nutrition directors in Alaska, New Mexico, Wyoming and Mississippi
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# The NAAC Hangout



ICN is hosting quarterly informal Zoom meetings called NAAC Hangouts. At these Hangouts, ICN and NAAC members share their perspectives on Native American/Alaskan Native child nutrition, as well as personal stories and concerns about Native American communities and schools in their part of the country



The fourth quarter Hangout will feature NAAC member and USDA partner, Gina O'Brian on Wednesday, December 15, at 1:00 pm ET.

Gina O'Brian, RDN, has worked with FNS programs at the Mountain Plains Regional Office for 26 years. Her experience spans WIC, Child Nutrition Programs, Food Distribution Programs, FDPIR, SNAP-Ed, and the region's Tribal Affairs Coordination team.

Gina works with nutrition staff across programs to clarify nutrition-related policy, share nutrition curriculums, consider cultural applications, and provide nutrition technical assistance to ensure meals meet dietary guidelines and truly nourish. Gina mentors interns and helps lead the Region's Cross-Program Nutrition Advisory Committee, providing guidance and inspiration to State Nutrition Action Coalitions. On a personal note, Gina enjoys her active Colorado life with her husband, two children, and three doodles.

Please reach out to [Chris Aloia](#) if you are interested in sharing your story for the first quarter of 2022!

Her career began in Washington, DC, where she founded and directed the DC Farm to

School Network. Andrea earned a BS in Environmental Engineering from Tufts University.

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## Conference Presentations and Upcoming Events

- **Intertribal Agriculture Council Annual Conference**, Las Vegas, NV, December 7-9, 2021
  - **Fourth Quarter Hangout**, Zoom Meeting, Wednesday, December 15, at 1:00 pm ET
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## Questions, Comments, Feedback

We want to hear from you. Email [naac@theicn.org](mailto:naac@theicn.org) or the ICN staff members below:



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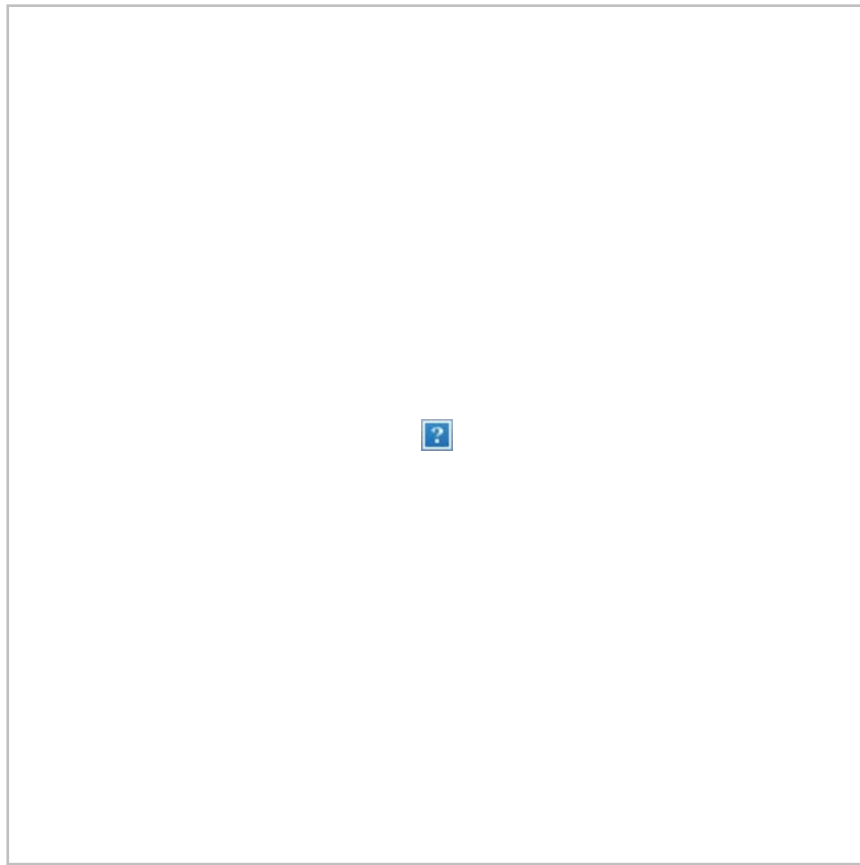
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