Project Objectives
The Nebraska Harvest of the Month (HOM) Local Indigenous Foods Training (LIFT) efforts aim to improve access to healthy local food and provide educational opportunities to understand Native food systems, health, and science embedded in Indigenous foodways. Programming for NATIVE Farm to School is distinct in that it relies on the traditional knowledge, community, language, and deep, rich ancestral connections to land and food. Each of these elements are uniquely interconnected making them essential to a Native Farm to School programs. The Nebraska HOM LIFT program strives to advance Native Farm to School and food sovereignty efforts by cultivating the next generation of leaders by teaching students and staff statewide about Native food sovereignty by supporting “the right of American Indians… to produce their own traditional foods on their own lands to sustain themselves, their families, and their communities.”

Native American Food Systems
Traditional ways of acquiring food in the Native American culture were by hunting and gathering, agriculture, and trading. The Native American diet was different depending on which method was used to obtain their food and the different regions of the country where they originated from, which differed after the development of reservations, which created displacement from native regions.

Many Native food systems were disrupted due to European settlement and the displacement of Native peoples from their lands. Then, for over a hundred years, the U.S. government issued food to Native Americans. The food was unhealthy and substantially different from traditional diets. Unhealthy food, combined with uneven quality of and access to medical care, continues to leave many American Indians fighting an uphill battle for their health. Still, American Indians are working to restore their environments and original food sources to promote a return to traditional foods and food practices through food sovereignty efforts. Native food sovereignty is

Land Acknowledgement
Nebraska resides on the past, present, and future homelands of the Pawnee, Ponca, Oto-Missouria, Umoⁿhoⁿ, Dakota, Lakota, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Kaw Peoples, as well as the relocated Ho Chunk (Winnebago), Iowa, and Sac and Fox Peoples. This land acknowledgement allows readers the opportunity to understand impacts of colonization on tribes who occupied what is now Nebraska.

Please take a monument to consider the legacies of more than 150 years of displacement, violence, settlement, and survival that occurred on these lands. The Indigenous Harvest of the Month allows us to build respect and seek out inclusion of Native voice, realizing we must learn from each other, understand historical perspective, and build long-lasting collaborative relationships.

Harvest of the Month: Indigenous Foods
Many foods we eat today have existed in North America and have been essential for Native American Tribes across the country. Each tribe is unique in their selected foodways and what they ate varied according to region, tribe, and traditions. The Native American facts presented as part of the HOM resources should not be taken to describe every tribe as content provides a general description of Indigenous practices that vary widely and is unique across tribes. Indigenous Harvest of the Month highlights some of the items that were native to the Nebraska prairie and honor traditional food in recipes that have been modernized to highlight locally sourced ingredients utilized by Nebraska tribes.

Supporting Culture and Language
“Language is an integral part of cultural and traditional knowledge, making it an essential part of Native Farm to School programs. Language is grounded in one’s identity and an ancestral relationships with land, plants, animals, and water. Many Native languages express water, land and plants as animate, which honors the reverence that Native people have to their environment.”

NATIVE Farm to School resources address: Community, Traditional Foodways, Traditional Knowledge, Traditional Foods, Language, and Land Stewardship.

Honoring Indigenous languages encourages creative expressions for youth, supporting verbal and written development of cultural skills. There are several languages utilized by tribes in Nebraska. The Indigenous language flash cards developed as part of the Nebraska HOM educational materials highlight the most common translations for Indigenous items highlighted in the HOM toolkit.

Pilot Project
The Indigenous Nebraska HOM program was developed in partnership with the Nebraska Center for Rural Affairs (CRA). Staff from the Department of Education collaborated with CRA to engage tribal members from each of the four Nebraska tribes to select recipes, provide translation for the selected Indigenous products, and ensure information included in the educational resources accurately reflect the perspective of tribes located in Nebraska.

Nutrition Educational Resources
After tribal members selected and contributed to the Indigenous recipes included in the HOM toolkit, the recipes went through a recipe standardization process as part of the FY 21 Team Nutrition grant project. Recipes will be evaluated and taste tested by youth in both tribal communities as well as schools that have large number of Native youth during the 2023-2014 SY. Once fully evaluated the recipes will be included as part of the Nebraska Harvest of the Month program.

Resources included in the Indigenous Harvest of the Month toolkit include: Posters, Coloring Pages, “I Tried It” stickers, Trivia Sheets, Indigenous Language Flash Cards, Three Sisters Story, Social Media posts, Newsletter templates, PA Announcements & Branding tools that can be used to support both nutrition education or promotion goals to support wellness policy and food sovereignty efforts.

Three Sisters Story
Northern Plains Tribes called corn, bean, and squash “the three sisters” because they nurture each other like family when planted together. Beans naturally absorb nitrogen from the air and convert it to nitrates, fertilizing the soil for the corn and squash. In return, they are supported by winding around the corn stalks. The squash leaves provide ground cover between the corn and beans, preventing weeds from taking over the field. These three plants thrive better when than when they are planted alone. Grown together, these plants are able to thrive and provide high-yield, high-quality crops with a minimal environmental impact. Corn, beans, and squash have a unique symbiotic relationship in a Native American garden.

References
Native Farm to School Guide, A Project of First Nations Development Institute, https://www.firstnations.org/
Native-land.ca to learn about native nations, languages, or treaties of specific lands.
US Food Sovereignty Alliance, http://usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/what-is-food-sovereignty/
USDA- www.nal.usda.gov/collexänder/stories/three-sisters