



Kehtekaewak Farmers' Market – Growing Community and Local Foods to Combat Food Apartheid

The **Kehtekaewak** (“They Eat Food”) **Farmers' Market** seeks to increase the healthy and locally grown foods available to the Menominee community while supporting local growers and food businesses. The market runs Fridays from June to October and creates a seasonal, community space for growers, food entrepreneurs, artists, and craftspeople. The HOP-funded Kemāmaceqtaq project supports the College of Menominee Nation in providing technical support and education to alleviate obstacles to food production and empower local growers.

Public Health Challenge

The rich food traditions of the Menominee Nation have been disrupted by the imposition of unhealthy food systems and systemic barriers to traditional harvest practices. Four in ten community members have obesity which connects to this history and the ongoing harms of settler-colonialism. The Kehtekaewak Farmers' Market, along with other HOP-funded interventions, combat food apartheid by addressing the shortage of local growers and increasing community access to locally-grown, healthy and traditional foods.

Approach

Since 2015, the College of Menominee Nation (CMN) has worked to address barriers to local food production, support the local economy, and increase food grown within the reservation through the Kehtekaewak Farmers' Market. CMN offers educational resources and technical support for local growers to enable local food production. Since 2021, CMN and the Kemāmaceqtaq project have collaborated to increase the number of growers able to participate in the Farmers' Market by providing grower stipends, soil testing services, seeds, and other supplies necessary to improve growing conditions. The Kemāmaceqtaq project has also provided for increased market signage and social media about the market, including vendor highlight posts on Facebook.



Another Kemāmaceqtaq project activity, the Harvest of the Moon (HoM) culturally-specific curriculum, has a monthly booth at the Farmers' Market. The HoM team offers free samples, recipe cards, distributions of the featured fresh food, and educational activities aligned with the current moon. For example, visitors in August learned about the Mēn Kēsoq or “Blueberry Moon,” sampled a blueberry corn pudding, engaged in art and language-learning activities, and received free pints of fresh blueberries.

The program has helped to increase food knowledge in the community while supporting local growers at the Farmers' Market. A local food business regularly provides lunch and community groups often set up to fundraise for local efforts. Other special activities at the market have featured cooking demonstrations with Indigenous chefs, vaccination education, and voter promotion.

Quotes

"Fun, [I've] met people, found new opportunities to sell."

– Farmers' Market vendor

"It is always a pleasant experience."

– Farmers' Market visitor

Results

When the Kehtekaewak Farmers' Market first started there was not a lot of locally grown produce, but the market has expanded to feature local produce at every single market. This summer the market engaged 12 growers selling a variety of fresh produce, including squash, zucchini, tomatoes, and cucumbers. Many of these growers received stipends through the Kemānceqtaq project to allow them to prepare, plant, and maintain a garden without the deterrence of financial investment. Among other Farmers' Market vendors, almost half also sold fresh fruits and vegetables.

In a September 2022 survey of Farmers' Market visitors, one-third reported buying fresh fruits and vegetables. Almost half reported visiting the Farmers' Market every week, and many of these frequent visitors were Menominee elders.

Alleviating barriers to the production and sale of healthy foods and empowering local growers not only aids in making traditional and healthy foods more accessible but supports the local economy and keeps profits within the community. Of the vendors surveyed in October 2022, half reported that they had found new opportunities for their business because of the Farmers' Market. The majority of sellers indicated that it provided an avenue for additional income and a space to make connections with other sellers. Farmers' Market vendors also indicated that this experience has strengthened their connections to the community. The Farmers' Market is supporting the revitalization of traditional foodways, a strengthened local economy, and community connections that all support the health of the community.

Sustaining Success

The Kemānceqtaq project and CMN will continue this collaboration and provide stipends and supplies to growers in the coming year. CMN also sets aside profits from the Farmers' Market to sustain support for growers in coming years. With increased experience with the market by local growers and vendors and amongst visitors, we anticipate the Kehtekaewak Farmers' Market to continue to provide for nutritious local food for many years.

For more information, visit:

The Kehtekaewak Farmers' Market webpage:

<https://www.menominee.edu/community-landing/food-sovereignty/menominee-farmers-market>

The Kemānceqtaq project webpage:

<https://menominee.extension.wisc.edu/kemamaceqtaq-were-all-moving/>

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Contact Information

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