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**Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community launches $6 million campaign to improve the physical and mental wellness of Native youth in Minnesota**

*Three-year campaign to fund a variety of efforts, including first-of-its-kind playspace research project*

**Prior Lake, Minn.**— The [Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC)](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fshakopeedakota.org%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cpjames1%40jhu.edu%7Cb44b4c480bb84155c96908dd366b03ba%7C9fa4f438b1e6473b803f86f8aedf0dec%7C0%7C0%7C638726555522804056%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=KdXPsgIZXU3KjnK0ejs3j18Texvs15IwPL9MsXism1o%3D&reserved=0) today announced the launch of [IndigeFit Kids](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Findigefitkids.org%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cpjames1%40jhu.edu%7Cb44b4c480bb84155c96908dd366b03ba%7C9fa4f438b1e6473b803f86f8aedf0dec%7C0%7C0%7C638726555522818105%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=rBiU74na2%2FxD8sts30%2FBemjVYHzyhvBsBW%2Bzwf9KrCE%3D&reserved=0" \o ), a $6 million, three-year philanthropic campaign to improve the physical fitness and mental wellness of Native youth in Minnesota. SMSC Vice-Chairwoman Natasha Hacker and Secretary/Treasurer Ashley Cornforth, who will co-chair the campaign for the tribe, announced the effort along with several key strategic partners today at the Minneapolis American Indian Center. [Click here to download photos from the announcement event](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdrive.google.com%2Fdrive%2Ffolders%2F11g-BcDE8y0bvpxVBoPBq4P4WQFYKCXED%3Fusp%3Dsharing&data=05%7C02%7Cpjames1%40jhu.edu%7Cb44b4c480bb84155c96908dd366b03ba%7C9fa4f438b1e6473b803f86f8aedf0dec%7C0%7C0%7C638726555522831687%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=OmDJPUFuspOVji1%2B%2FXKZs9V2b1VcYo6uyBcOz0L4T8M%3D&reserved=0).

“Good health of Native youth today is fundamental to the vitality of Native communities for generations to come, but health problems are significantly more common among Native American youth than among their peers in the general population,” said Vice-Chairwoman Hacker. “We believe that through a dedicated campaign, we can change this reality and close health disparities among young Native Americans in Minnesota by giving them more resources to lead active, healthy lives.”

IndigeFit Kids is a large-scale effort to deploy resources and draw on expertise to improve the physical fitness and wellness of Native youth statewide. This campaign will fund a variety of projects and programs focused on physical fitness and wellness; commission research; raise public awareness; support efforts to Indigenize athletic programs; and more.

“There are many long-standing environmental factors and social determinants of health that impact the overall health and wellness of Native youth, but by focusing on physical activity, good nutrition and healthy habits, we can create brighter futures for Native kids and communities,” said Secretary/Treasurer Cornforth.

Strategic partners in the IndigeFit Kids campaign’s first activities include [KABOOM!](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fkaboom.org%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cpjames1%40jhu.edu%7Cb44b4c480bb84155c96908dd366b03ba%7C9fa4f438b1e6473b803f86f8aedf0dec%7C0%7C0%7C638726555522845893%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=i5yLHEkmo6zBEL%2BwojzFu5DTnYayMIO6KedVGa%2FJEDQ%3D&reserved=0), the national nonprofit working to end playspace inequity; [Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health](https://cih.jhu.edu/), one of the nation’s leading academic health organizations focused on the health of Native communities; and the [Minnesota Vikings](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vikings.com%2Fcommunity%2Fvikings-foundation%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cpjames1%40jhu.edu%7Cb44b4c480bb84155c96908dd366b03ba%7C9fa4f438b1e6473b803f86f8aedf0dec%7C0%7C0%7C638726555522860386%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ciVMi87T7sDwhsofFP1XD%2FLsSyW4bQ2SsDW00KffMds%3D&reserved=0), one of the region’s leaders in promoting fitness and physical activity among youth.

* Through IndigeFit Kids, **the SMSC is providing $1.5 million to KABOOM!**over the next three years. The SMSC has commissioned KABOOM! to conduct a first-of-its-kind research project to assess the adequacy of playspaces in Native communities in Minnesota, both in reservation settings and in urban areas. The SMSC has also committed to fund the building of five new community-designed playspaces with KABOOM! in Native communities in Minnesota over the next three years.
* IndigeFit Kids is also granting**$500,000 to the Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health** to conduct a planning study to prepare for an in-depth, culturally appropriate research initiative to focus on holistic health among Native youth, with special focus on physical activity and the obstacles and pathways for promoting good health among Native youth. This study over the next two years would represent the essential first step to embarking on the most thorough, wide-ranging study of Native youth fitness and health ever undertaken in Indian Country and would determine the best ways in which it should be conducted.
* IndigeFit Kids will also partner with the **Minnesota Vikings**in expanding team sports and wellness opportunities for Native kids. More details to be announced in the future.

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**About the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community**

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community is a federally recognized, sovereign Dakota tribal government located southwest of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Following a Dakota tradition of generosity, the SMSC is one of the top philanthropists in Minnesota and is dedicated to helping build strong, healthy communities. The tribe is a committed community partner and a leader in protecting and restoring natural resources. The SMSC’s government, Gaming Enterprise and various other enterprises are collectively the largest employer in Scott County and attract millions of visitors to the region. For more information, visit [ShakopeeDakota.org](https://shakopeedakota.org/).

**About IndigeFit Kids**

IndigeFit Kids is a philanthropic campaign of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) dedicated to empowering Native youth through fitness and wellness. The SMSC has committed $6 million to improve the physical and mental wellness of Native youth in Minnesota. Launched in January 2025 as a three-year campaign, IndigeFit Kids funds a variety of projects and programs that support the physical fitness and wellness of Native youth; commissions research; raises awareness; supports efforts to Indigenize athletic programs; and more. For more information, visit IndigeFitKids.org.

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