

## Whisper n Thunder

The Whisper of Native American stories, the Thunder of stories that demand to be told

### Food, Health & Insecurity

- Helen Oliff for National Relief Charities

April is “go time” for the annual Feinstein [Campaign to Fight Hunger](#). It is also [National Minority Health Month](#) by the Office of Minority Health at HHS. Feinstein has a plan to help fight hunger, and HHS has a plan to reduce healthcare disparities and achieve health equity for American Indians and other minorities. NRC offers this story in honor of both, because good health and good nutrition are inseparable.



For 17 consecutive years, philanthropist Alan Shawn Feinstein has divided \$1 million among nonprofits that help fight hunger. Feinstein issues this annual challenge to help nonprofits spur food-related donations. Healthy nutrition and the fight against hunger are a priority for the 65 American Indian reservations that National Relief Charities is serving and, over the past 5 years, donors gave NRC 6.4 million pounds of healthy food under the Feinstein Challenge.

#### What is Food Insecurity?

According to the USDA, food security is about household economics and social conditions related to limited or uncertain access to adequate food. “[Food insecurity](#)” is defined as reduced quality, variety and desirability of diet (i.e., you may be eating enough food quantity but not getting enough “nutrition”). In severe cases, very low food “insecurity” results in disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. Poverty is the main cause of food insecurity.

#### Where is the Poverty Line?

The 2014 HHS poverty line is \$11,670 for a family of one. For a family of four, it is \$23,850 or \$5,962 per person.\* Meeting basic needs is extremely challenging on this income and life choices are essentially limited to addressing the next crisis.

#### Why is Health a Food Issue?

Obesity and diabetes are closely linked to poverty and food insecurity. In addition, [food deserts](#) with low access to fresh, whole foods are usually located in impoverished areas. Where you see one of these factors, you are likely to see all and, once a nutrition-related disease manifests, “health insecurity” is likely as well. Obama Care and the health insurance mandate do not eradicate the obstacles of access, underfunding and other healthcare disparities for families living in poverty or in isolated areas with limited healthcare providers. This is the goal of HHS.

They sponsor the National Minority Health Month to raise awareness about the health and healthcare disparities that affect Native Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities.

In a nutshell, Feinstein fights food insecurity while National Minority Health fights health insecurity. We hope you will look into the Feinstein Challenge and National Minority Health Month. Both are worthy causes.

\* <http://aspe.hhs.gov/POVERTY/14poverty.cfm>

Banner Graphic: [www.firstpeople.us](http://www.firstpeople.us)  
Image Courtesy the Author \* All Rights Reserved