

# Outline of



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Learn more / get involved at [www.AmpleHarvest.org/inIndianCountry](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/inIndianCountry)

info@AmpleHarvest.org



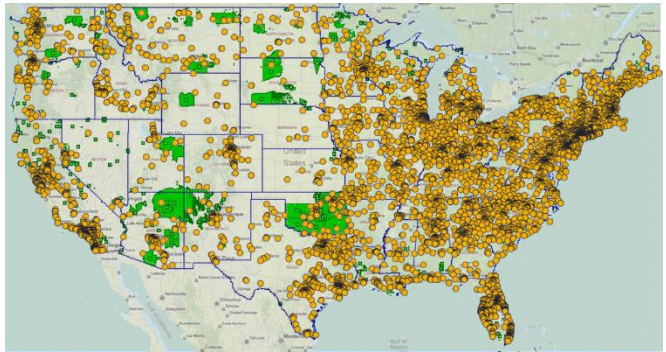
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## AmpleHarvest.org In Indian Country – A Prologue

AmpleHarvest.org is a nationwide hunger/food waste nonprofit (program explained below) that was founded in 2009. As we have expanded to more and more communities across all 50 states, we came to realize that there were large swaths of the country (green areas on map) that we were not yet reaching.

AmpleHarvest.org's founder, Gary Oppenheimer, has met over the years with a number of Tribal leaders from across the country to learn about the food/nutritional needs of their communities and to explore how what has worked so well in the rest of the nation could also benefit Indian Country.



This white paper explains the heart of AmpleHarvest.org's approach to simultaneously solving the commingled problems of the waste of food (especially locally grown garden fresh food) and the desperate need for that food at food pantries and other food programs nationwide. It then will map out a vision of a variant of the existing program that is explicitly designed for Tribal communities across the country.

It is important to note that the goal is to create a program that, like the already existing program for non-Tribal communities, will be accepted and function well in any Tribal community, regardless of where it is located in the country. Simply put a program that will work for all First Peoples.

Lastly, it has been said that the best solutions are local to the problem. When thinking about food or gardening programs, people tend to focus on their community, yet AmpleHarvest.org requires thinking differently. While the gardener – food pantry connection and the movement of food is hyper-local, AmpleHarvest.org has scaled to 4,200 communities nationwide, making it a local program but on a nationwide scale.

Comments and feedback should be sent to [gary@AmpleHarvest.org](mailto:gary@AmpleHarvest.org).

Thank you.

## AmpleHarvest.org – Introduction

AmpleHarvest.org is a non-profit organization that runs a 50 state hunger/food waste program of the same name. AmpleHarvest.org looks at hunger and food waste through a different lens to focus on the abundance of surplus food grown by 62 million home and community gardeners nationwide.



It built a nationwide public awareness program and a customized search engine to enable growers to act on the information, thus establishing without the need for storage, refrigeration, or logistics, a way for millions of Americans in need to get freshly grown food.

AmpleHarvest.org is a technology-based, cost efficient, brick-and-mortar free solution to hunger/food waste and diet-related disease. With AmpleHarvest.org, the cost of the food as well as the logistics of warehousing and moving it, the two most costly parts of traditional food programs, vanish as the gardeners grow, harvest and transport the food themselves. This scalable solution does not incur the historically large costs of any other food program. The result is an extremely high ROI that is unmatched by any other similar non-profit.

AmpleHarvest.org has decentralized the food donation process by bypassing the regional Feeding America food banks entirely - with the full support of Feeding America and the food banks themselves - effectively “flattening” the supply chain. The AmpleHarvest.org solution engages legacy resources – America’s home and community gardeners plus the existing national food pantry network, and links them through a custom food pantry search engine to do what the centralized food bank network has been unable to do – utilize locally grown fresh food.



In short, AmpleHarvest.org works because it leverages both the pent up supply of food as well as grower goodwill. According to a recent Cisco Systems analysis, once both are unleashed, growers are likely to continue donating their surplus produce for the rest of their gardening lives, which makes AmpleHarvest.org's impact systemic and sustainable.

## AmpleHarvest.org – What it isn't?

### 1. It is not a food pantry/bank program

AmpleHarvest.org does not feed people directly. Food pantry/bank type programs are in a never-ending costly loop of securing funding, acquiring (typically processed) food and then distributing the food. Rinse and repeat. While they do feed people, they do not address underlying root-cause issues nor is their focus on fresh food. AmpleHarvest.org is instead a



program that taps into the passion of tens of millions of gardeners who have always hated wasting their surplus food, and connects them with one of more than 8,000 local food pantries eager for that surplus. This sustained pipeline assures that the food gets to a hunger/feeding program without AmpleHarvest.org actually “touching” the food. Most importantly, it permanently solves the two information problems of gardeners who thought they could not donate fresh food, and food pantries that did not know that this food was freely available to them.

### 2. It is not a traditional food recovery program

AmpleHarvest.org does not actively recover (i.e. pickup and transport) surplus/unused food from gardens, stores, restaurants, or farmers markets. However, many of these food recovery programs rely on AmpleHarvest.org's search engine to help them do their work. These programs are logistics heavy, meaning the cost of running these programs as well as the difficulty in building and managing a team of volunteers prevents them from scaling. Lastly, as conventional programs require teams of volunteers vs. AmpleHarvest.org's use of the individual gardener, AmpleHarvest.org is the only program with social distancing built into the solution.





### 3. It is not a gardening program

AmpleHarvest.org does not set up gardens nor teach people how to garden. Other programs, such as the USDA Extension Master Gardener program, do an excellent job of helping new gardeners learn how to garden. AmpleHarvest.org steps in after that point.



### 4. It is not a food drive

AmpleHarvest.org is not a collection point to which people can bring food (especially purchased food) for redistribution to food programs. Rather, it enables growers to donate their surplus harvest to a local pantry as soon as it has been harvested, and at a time that is convenient to the grower and on a date and time shortly before the pantry clients pick up food. This eliminates any need for refrigeration and storage.



Furthermore, the fact that food travels from the donor (gardener) to the hungry family (by way of the local food pantry) in hours, guarantees that the food will be “garden fresh” by the time it reaches the family.

### 5. It is not a peer to peer “food sharing” program

AmpleHarvest.org does not facilitate nor encourage people “sharing” food with strangers. While these programs do reduce the waste of food, they generally do not benefit hungry families. Moreover, there is no legal protection for the donors.

### 6. Nor is it a gleaning program

AmpleHarvest.org does not focus on farms where organizations bring in volunteers to harvest leftover food. It is instead focused on home/community gardeners that grow food for personal use. Note: Given the current crisis experienced by farmers during the COVID-19 crisis, AmpleHarvest.org has been able to slightly reposition itself to help smaller family farms that were unable to bring their harvest to the market, to be able to donate it instead.



## AmpleHarvest.org – What *Is* it?

It is an incredibly simple solution to hunger and food waste based on the idea that the problem isn't the food itself, but rather misinformation and missing information.

The AmpleHarvest.org program is an information and technology-based solution to a nationwide problem most people never knew about: the waste of over 11 billion pounds of surplus harvest from America's home and community gardens. Ending the waste of this locally grown fresh food dramatically decreases hunger and malnutrition on a permanent basis.



Until now, there has been no way to supply locally grown fresh produce into the food pantry network because the food bank network's hub and spoke design prevented acceptance of this food. The legacy system buys/collects packaged food, moves it to a centralized location (a regional Feeding America food bank), and then delivers it to pantries. The refrigeration, special trucks, and timely delivery required to supply fresh produce has been impossible under this model.

The AmpleHarvest.org model solves the problem by enabling gardeners to connect with local pantries to which they can deliver their own surplus harvest year after year. By "überizing" or flattening the process, the freely available food travels the least distance in the shortest possible time, to a food pantry within the community.

Harvesting and transporting the food to the pantry is done by the gardener. The ultimate distribution of the food to hungry families remains with the food pantry.

This simple solution addresses:

- Hunger
- Food Waste
- Malnutrition including diet-related diseases
- Climate change and the waste stream
- Community Engagement



## AmpleHarvest.org – Extreme Efficiency

As an information-based program, it incurs nearly none of the costs typically associated with traditional hunger relief programs:

1. It does not have to buy food because the food already exists in the community
2. It does not have to ship food because the grower transports the food directly to the local food pantry
3. It does not have to refrigerate food because the harvesting, transporting and ultimate distribution of the food all takes place on a same day/next day basis
4. It does not have to maintain office space in the communities it serves because the technology provides the necessary ubiquity
5. It does not have to hire local staff because the work of growing, harvesting, and delivering is largely performed by both the grower and the pantry staff.



## AmpleHarvest.org – A Scaled Viral Solution

Because AmpleHarvest.org operates as a cloud-based solution, it can scale to any community in “real time.” As of 2022, more than 8,000 food pantries in 4,200 communities in all 50 states have joined AmpleHarvest.org with more signing up daily.



Once a food pantry has registered, it can start receiving food from nearby growers in the harvest season as soon as it is verified by AmpleHarvest.org’s staff.

In addition to AmpleHarvest.org promoting the program nationwide through social and traditional media and byway of a massive Google marketing grant, posters and boilerplate press releases are provided to each food pantry to help them promote it locally. Additionally, a large-scale partnership with Bonnie Plants is providing critical outreach to the entire gardening community, both directly and through Point of Sale programs.

Lastly, as each gardener learns about their capacity to donate their surplus bounty to a nearby food pantry, they tend to share the news with neighboring gardeners, who in turn themselves start sharing it further.

Like lighting one match in a pack of matches, it quickly spreads.



To better understand the impact of this scaling, a team from the Harvard Business School Alumni Association in early 2020 created a tool to illustrate the impact of this one of a kind solution.



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For example, a one-time \$100 donation to AmpleHarvest.org results in 206 lbs. of food donated in the first year. Because more growers learn from each other that they can donate, the second year, 278 lbs. are donated, and this increases annually.

Impact of Donations to AmpleHarvest.org		\$ 100 <<Enter Donated Amount here				
Year Number	1	2	5	10	20	
<b>Impact of a one time donation over 20 years</b>						
<b>PRODUCE DONATIONS</b>						
Total lbs of produce donated - not wasted (each year)	206	278	684	3,065	61,625	
<b>Total lbs of produce donated - not wasted (cumulative)</b>		<b>484</b>	<b>1,190</b>	<b>5,335</b>	<b>107,273</b>	
Total value of produce donated	\$ 496	\$ 670	\$ 1,647	\$ 7,386	\$ 148,517	
<b>NUTRITION</b>						
Servings of produce donated - not wasted (each year)	823	1,111	2,734	12,260	246,501	
<b>Servings of produce donated (cumulative)</b>		<b>1,934</b>	<b>8,194</b>	<b>44,936</b>	<b>948,436</b>	

By the 20<sup>th</sup> year, 107,273 lbs. worth \$148,517 will have been donated! This tool is publicly available at [www.AmpleHarvest.org/impact](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/impact). Feel free to explore it.

With a donation to a conventional hunger/food waste program, most of the money is applied toward acquiring and distributing the food. Once consumed, the impact of that donation ends. More money is needed to acquire and distribute more food.

With a donation to AmpleHarvest.org, most of the money is applied toward connecting more growers to more food pantries. And as that happens, growers increasingly share this new donation opportunity with neighboring growers, creating an ever-expanding impact.



# AmpleHarvest.org In Indian Country

## Current Status of AmpleHarvest.org In Indian Country

*Important note: All throughout this document, for the sake of brevity, we are using the term “Indian Country” to include all Native American in federally recognized Tribes, as well as Alaska Native Peoples.*



Historically, AmpleHarvest.org has taken a scattershot approach toward expanding its impact nationwide. We sought out food pantries with the help of regional Feeding America food banks, the faith community, gardening groups, online marketing and social/traditional media, regardless of where they were in America. The goal has been to get as many “dots” on the map as possible, wherever possible, to make it easier for local gardeners to donate their surplus harvest going forward. There was no regard to the language, ethnicity or any local cultural values, and while AmpleHarvest.org is workable and beneficial for all communities, our marketing and public awareness approach may not have been as impactful in Tribal communities as it has been in the rest of the nation.

The result is that our map shows wide swaths of the nation that do not yet provide the opportunity for gardeners to donate their surplus harvest. This is a missed opportunity for the communities that we want to address.

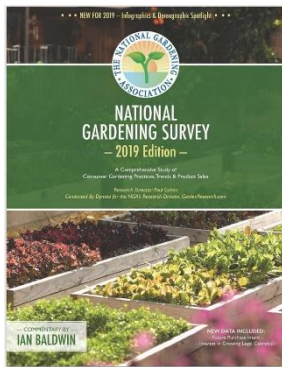
## Food and Nutrition Problems in Indian Country

Much of America suffers from limited access to healthy food, resulting in epidemics of obesity, Type II diabetes, hypertension, etc. These problems are far worse in many Tribal communities. Food insecurity affects two thirds of reservations nationwide making Native American families four times more likely to be hungry or malnourished than the rest of the country. While government programs do provide food commodities, they are most likely to be processed food rather than fresh food.

## Gardening in Indian Country

Nationwide, 62 million people engage in home/community gardening. Indeed, the Extension Programs at many land grant universities are particularly focused on helping people in Tribal community gardens.

For those with any gardening experience, you will know that many gardeners grow more than they can use, preserve or share with friends. AmpleHarvest.org’s own data, analyzed by a Harvard-trained economist in 2019, determined that this surplus harvest could feed 28 million hungry people annually. Since that time, the number of gardeners in America has increased by about 20 million, so the current impact is significantly higher.



According to the [2019 National Gardening Survey](#) from the National Gardening Association, gardening is in many cases more prevalent in Native American households than in most other ethnic/racial groups, presenting a greater than average opportunity for these communities to nourish themselves.

While some reservations are located in arid regions that make farming difficult, a reality that may discourage some people from participating in gardening, using good soil in raised beds can make gardening not only possible but prolific for those so inclined regardless of where they live.

These two questions from the survey point to the impact potential of AmpleHarvest.org in Indian Country.

“Which of these activities have you or other members of your household participated in during the past year?”

		<u>Vegetable gardening</u>	<u>Container gardening</u>	<u>Herb gardening</u>
<b>Ethnic/Racial Identity</b>	African Amer./Black/Caribbean	13%	7%	8%
	Asian American/Pacific Islander	30%	23%	22%
	Caucasian/White	28%	24%	18%
	Latin/Hispanic	18%	14%	13%
	Native American, Inuit or Aleut	32%	23%	26%
	Other Race	20%	7%	10%

“Which of the following did you or someone in your household purchase in the past year?”

		<u>Vegetable garden plants</u>	<u>Vegetable garden seed</u>
<b>Ethnic/Racial Identity</b>	African Amer./Black/Caribbean	20%	26%
	Asian American/Pacific Islander	28%	45%
	Caucasian/White	37%	27%
	Latin/Hispanic	29%	29%
	Native American, Inuit or Aleut	42%	68%
	Other Race	31%	29%

These numbers speak to greater than average opportunity for Native American food pantries to benefit from local surplus harvest donations.

### Unique Circumstances

Many reservations are located in rural environments that, as opposed to urban settings, lend themselves toward open space that facilitates gardening. Furthermore, the tradition of sharing food is a value that all tribal nations share. Both of these point to an environment where AmpleHarvest.org’s approach would be a good fit.

Other factors that come into play (addressed below) include the lack of street addresses in some communities, poor internet/cellular infrastructure in some communities and a different model for food distribution programs than the rest of the country.

## The Solution

### Keys for Success

Making this program a success will, like it has in the rest of the country, require a maximum number of food pantries to become “visible” on AmpleHarvest.org, and an ever-increasing number of gardeners learning about donating their surplus harvest.

AmpleHarvest.org is already at work in some Tribal communities thanks to our scattershot approach over the past 13 years, and in those communities, we will work on expanding what has already been started.

For those communities where there has been no AmpleHarvest.org engagement as of yet, we’ll work to identify key leaders and partners in the community that can help more rapidly entrench and expand the program. Expanding our existing partnerships with the appropriate Feeding America regional food bank will be critical to this effort.

Lastly, it will be critically important that both the gardeners as well as the people managing the food pantries see this program as one that is entirely community focused regardless of where they are located, with AmpleHarvest.org limited to supplying needed information and connectivity.

## Leadership and Guidance from Tribal Leaders and local food programs

AmpleHarvest.org was founded by a Master Gardener with a technology background. He launched it based on his experience and expertise for the nation as a whole. Creating an Indian Country program within AmpleHarvest.org will require input, guidance, leadership and support from a numerous Native Americans from across the country. Indeed, before even considering creation of this program, AmpleHarvest.org reached out to Tribal leaders nationwide for their guidance and support to make sure that we were headed in the correct direction.

## Dealing with limited internet access in some communities

One of the major problems that some reservations experience is limited internet access as well as poor cellular service. Our founder experienced that first-hand years back on one of his visits. While there are major government efforts to close these information/data gaps, we realize that it may be some time until every community is fully covered.

AmpleHarvest.org, founded back in 2009 when widespread access to the Internet was somewhat less prevalent nationwide than it is today, didn't require (and we still don't) food pantries to have their own internet connection.

The only time Internet access is necessary – by cell phone, at home, a public library or elsewhere – is for the initial registration. Once registered on AmpleHarvest.org, internet access, although helpful for food pantry updates, is not required.



Of course, a gardener seeking a pantry to which to donate does need internet access and has the option to use either an internet connected computer/tablet or their cell phone – whichever provides the best connectivity.

## Dealing with the lack of standardized street addressing schemes in some communities

While most Americans are used to having a home address with a street name and number, in some Tribal communities, finding someone might be more like “turn off U.S. Highway 191 between mile markers 1 and 2. It’s a blue house with a tan roof.” While this works to help people find you, Google’s mapping logic, used by AmpleHarvest.org to help a gardener find a



food pantry, requires that the pantry street address be entered when the pantry joins AmpleHarvest.org. Google then converts that address to a longitude/latitude that it can use to best guide the gardener to the pantry.

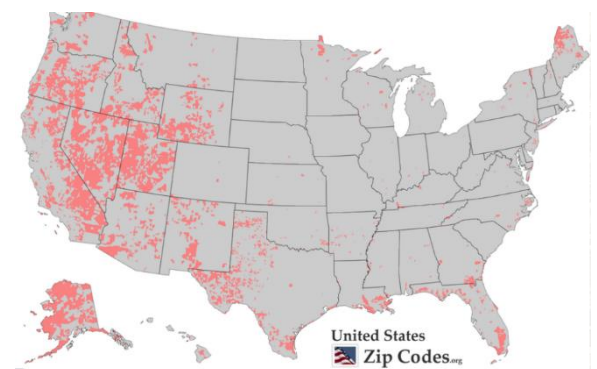
Recognizing the lack of traditional street addresses in some reservations, AmpleHarvest.org has partnered with [///What3Words](#) incorporating their technology to enable any pantry anywhere in the country to map out its \*exact\* location with 10 foot accuracy, even if there is no traditional street address. This will also be useful for food programs that may be mobile or those with a separate entrance or even building on a larger property.

Where available, AmpleHarvest.org uses Google Street View to provide a photo of the building to help donors more easily find it. Food pantries located on streets that have not been surveyed by Google or that are unhappy with the image Google provides, can upload their own photo of the food pantry building if they so choose.

### **Dealing with missing zip codes in some communities**

While zip codes are commonly used when doing an online search, there are many places in America that have people but no zip code (see map). This happens not only in some Tribal communities but also in other rural communities such as Goochland Courthouse VA, only 31 miles from the state capital.

AmpleHarvest.org In Indian Country will enable gardeners to enter their own or a nearby zip code when seeking a food pantry even if the pantry itself is in an area without a zip code.



### **Dealing with non-traditional food pantry/distribution models**

Food pantries and other food programs nationwide are typically nonprofit programs or are affiliated with a nonprofit program (such as a house of worship), and they distribute the food at no cost. Indeed, the two requirements for a food pantry to register at AmpleHarvest.org is that they meet these two requirements.

In some Tribal communities, the local food pantry, while functioning similarly to a nonprofit, may be actually housed in a commercial enterprise such as a store or gas station.

AmpleHarvest.org In Indian Country will be configured to accept these pantries even though they would not be normally accepted in other communities.

## Creating relevance

When you are trying to reach people as part of a public awareness effort, using relevant imagery and language is an important key to success.

AmpleHarvest.org will be seeking help from Tribal leaders on how to incorporate imagery and language that would catch the eye of any member of any Tribal community. None of this can be specific to one Tribe or one region of the country as the virtual nature of AmpleHarvest.org calls for site uniformity whenever possible.

## The Plan

The planned several steps that will be needed to create and launch this program will be:

- a. Source funding for this program. (done)
- b. Identify Tribal leaders and Tribal food program managers/experts nationwide who are willing to provide input, guidance and leadership in helping to build and roll out this program. Then share this document with a wide range of Tribal leaders to solicit their input. (done) One or more may be eventually invited to join the AmpleHarvest.org Board of Advisors, or possibly Board of Trustees. (in progress)
- c. Identify regional Tribal health/hunger organizations to help both guide the creation of informational material for the food pantries and their clients, as well as provide input on health and nutritional issues relevant to these communities. (in progress)
- d. Solicit guidance and input from the USDA and the Dept. of Interior. (done)
- e. Identify relevant content to be applied to the site and create a roadmap outlining the parts of the AmpleHarvest.org site that will be updated. (done).
- f. Contract with the web designer to create the adaptation to the AmpleHarvest.org web site. (done)
- g. Test platform and integrate with What3Words (done)
- h. Hire a Native American owned PR/media firm to help guide the rollout. (done)
- i. Develop social and traditional media campaigns in tandem with Tribal experts, along with [fliers for food pantries](#) and for gardeners, Google Ad Campaigns and video content for varied platforms to promote awareness. While initial efforts will be focused on larger Nations – Navajo, Cherokee, Sioux, Chippewa, and Choctaw, we'll welcome any engagement from any Nation/reservation at any time. (in progress)
- j. Invite the Tribal food pantries to join AmpleHarvest.org by working with Feeding America food banks that cover Tribal communities and Indigenous food programs to distribute the [fliers](#) to the pantries. (in progress)
- k. Hire part time paid Indigenous intern/contractor to find/register food pantries. (in progress).
- l. Reach the gardeners by engaging with major media outlets to provide editorial content as well as where appropriate, paid advertising. We will also engage with the Tribal Extension/Master Gardener program and major gardening group to help

- spread awareness. Where possible, we will leverage existing corporate partnerships such as Bonnie Plants and The Home Depot to assist in this effort. (in progress)
- m. Lastly, we will seek out in person or virtual speaking opportunities in Tribal communities nationwide. (in progress)

Additional information is available in the [AmpleHarvest.org in Indian Country FAQ page](#).

Note that AmpleHarvest.org will initially accept food pantry registrations from federally recognized Tribe/reservations, and within a few months, will open it to those with state recognition. Overall, this roll out plan that in many ways mirrors the original creation of AmpleHarvest.org and is expected to evolve over time.

### **Successfully rolling out AmpleHarvest.org In Indian Country**

Like the original rollout of AmpleHarvest.org in 2009, this will call for two efforts to occur simultaneously: adding more food pantries to the AmpleHarvest.org search engine, and a nationwide public awareness campaign targeting home and community gardeners in Indian Country.

This will be heavily reliant on partnerships with Tribal leaders, online influencers, targeted social media, editorial and paid content in media outlets such as Indian Country Today, partnering with the Master Gardener Network – especially in Extension programs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other partners that can help spread awareness. Founder Gary Oppenheimer will work with speaker bureaus to seek out panel and keynote speaking opportunities at Native American events where possible. He will also seek meetings with Tribal elders to help Nations roll out the program. CSR partnerships with Native American owned businesses as well as businesses that work in Tribal communities nationwide will be especially valuable in helping more gardeners learn that the solution to hunger is in their backyard.

This will also involve the creation of culturally relevant material (posters, etc.) that the communities can share themselves to help the gardeners in the community learn about donating their surplus harvest.

### **AmpleHarvest.org – The End Game**

Ultimately, the future has all gardeners in Indian Country as well as the rest of America knowing about their opportunity to donate their surplus harvest to a nearby food pantry, and all local food pantries being visible and accessible to any nearby gardener eager to donate their surplus harvest.



AmpleHarvest.org will never “end hunger” on its own. For one thing, no one grows corn flakes or bread in their backyard. The American food bank system will always need a supply of commercially produced food to help sustain hungry families. Additionally, most gardeners can’t grow/harvest in the winter months.

What AmpleHarvest.org however does is assure that America makes the best possible use of the surplus and freely available locally grown fresh food growers are eager to donate, to help nourish neighboring hungry families, as long as hunger exists.

### **AmpleHarvest.org In Indian Country - Epilogue**

*A great deal has been learned over the years from our successes as well as our mistakes, guidance and input from gardeners, food pantry managers, the food bank system, hungry families, fellow food waste and hunger nonprofits, and our volunteers, staff, Board of Advisors and Board of Trustees.*

*We are deeply grateful to the many Tribal Elders and Native American food sovereignty thought leaders from numerous Nations across America, who are helping to shape AmpleHarvest.org In Indian Country. This program could not be assembled or rolled out without their leadership, guidance and encouragement.*

*Thank you*

Please share any thoughts or suggestions with [gary@AmpleHarvest.org](mailto:gary@AmpleHarvest.org)

-EOD-