Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation's Food Sovereignty Initiative is a multifaceted set of programs and partnerships working together to create a sustainable and viable food system on the Pine Ridge Reservation. It has been a momentous year for the Initiative, and we are eager to share everything we have accomplished. In the past year we’ve expanded our agricultural facilities, resources, and community knowledge, increasing our capacity for creating lasting change.

For us, **Food Sovereignty** is about creating a food system that is:

- Healthy
- Culturally relevant
- Ecologically sound
- Sustainable
- Defined by local needs
- Accessible
- Creating Self-Sufficiency
- Connecting people to their food sources
- Affordable

Although a traditional food, chokecherries are also widely used today, growing in dark bunches along waterways. Over the summer we had a chokecherry jelly-making workshop. Many of the older women shared stories about growing up when self-sustaining habits, like harvesting or growing your own food, were the norm. One woman talked about her grandparents loading up all the grandkids in a wagon to go down by the creek and pick berries. Sharing stories like these is an important part of our work, since our tribal knowledge guides us and reminds us of where we come from — it informs our vision for the future of our Food Sovereignty Initiative.
This year the Initiative expanded several programs and started new ones too. Some of our greatest accomplishments for this year include:

- Construction of a geothermal greenhouse
- Management of two large gardens
- Numerous community education events
- Construction of a large poultry house
- Arrival of over 500 chicks
- Planting an orchard of traditional fruit trees
- Coordinating Pine Ridge’s Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition
- Completion of a locally-based food sovereignty curriculum

A New Home: 500+ Chicks Join the TVCDC Team

Live chicks for our Demonstration Farm were expected to arrive one Friday afternoon, but the truck they were supposed to be on left without them! It was critical to their survival to get them to the warmth of the brooders set up in their new home, so Food Sovereignty Initiative staff drove 150 miles to get the chicks. Despite arriving at 10 pm, the chicks were safely unloaded, fed, watered, and ready to begin their new life as part of our Regenerative Farm. They continue to grow, run, and play, and soon they will be laying dozens of eggs each day.
Here’s some of this year’s biggest steps forward in growing that future:

Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition
The Food Sovereignty Coalition has 5 active members of community partner organizations that are working together to create a local food system. This coalition was able to get buffalo meat into the 9 Head Start Centers across the reservation. We also held an annual garden tour to teach our members about different garden systems we’re all using.

Food Sovereignty Curriculum
This educational guide was completed this spring and will be featured in local classrooms during the 2017-2018 school year! Geared toward older elementary students, this guide is full of information, activities, graphics, and review exercises to help students engage in hands-on learning. Topics include Oglala food histories, current local foods, nutrition, gardening, safe food handling, and food preservation.

“The Coalition’s long term goal is local food sovereignty through passing on knowledge to the next generations.”
- Leslie Rae Henry, Oglala Lakota College Ag. Extension
Community Classes
Bringing people together to learn useful skills such as organic gardening, canning, tree planting, and a buffalo kill, have been major highlights from our community classes. We held over 20 workshops and had 120 participants in total, who shared meals, created healing salves, learned recipes, and exchanged ideas and laughter.

Reconnecting to our Food Source: Poultry Processing
Around 20 local youth participated in our Summer Youth Leadership Development Program this year. Participants learned to butcher chickens in a safe and healthy manner. With 32 chickens processed all students had the opportunity to properly learn how to humanely process & store them.

Regenerative Demonstration Farm
The demonstration farm is up and running and includes the Poultry Unit, Paddock System, and Community Gardens. Jokingly called the “chicken palace”, the poultry unit is now fully constructed and the 500+ chickens moved in. The Poultry Palace also has a beautiful solarium art wall, designed by our Artist Advisory Board. In the paddock system we planted over 500 traditional fruit trees including chokecherry, buffalo berry, and wild plum. As a result of our community gardens we gave fresh produce to over 50 families and held our first Farmer’s Market.

“The classes allowed us to gather as a community to learn more about the traditional plants, medicines and foods all our relatives who came before us took care of and depended on.”
- Lisa Iron Cloud, Class participant
Our Food Sovereignty Initiative has rapidly expanded in the last year and is only going to continue to grow. We know there is an urgent need for healthy, accessible foods that nourish our people. As part of our commitment to creating a local food system here on Pine Ridge, we are dedicated to learning from others as well as sharing our story. Our staff presented on the Duck Valley Reservation & the Healthy Kids Healthy Futures conference this year, and also learned a lot of useful information that will help our next year be a success.

**BY THE NUMBERS: HOW WE INCREASED FOOD SOVEREIGNTY THIS YEAR**

- **1530 ft²** Geothermal Greenhouse
- **560** Rhode Island Red Chickens
- **1500 ft²** Poultry & Egg facility
- **18,769 ft²** Organic Garden Space
- **500** Food Curriculums Printed
- **43+** Tours & Trainings
- **530** Traditional Fruit Trees Planted

For more information on our Food Sovereignty Initiative, contact Nick Hernandez at 605-455-2700 or nhernandez@thundervalley.org

You can also find more information on our website, www.thundervalley.org