

---

# The 2017 IAC Youth Meeting

## A Platform for Change



**As the winter painted across Indian Country's vast landscapes, the 2017 IAC Essay contest highlighted a bright future for Indian Agriculture. Pictured above, more than 30 tribal nations, represented by over 70 young adults gathered to identify solutions to the question, "What does my community need in the 2018 Farm Bill?"**

Equitable access to Department of Agriculture programs, support in the development and enhancement of local food systems and economies, and improved access to capital for value added entrepreneurial ventures were outlined as the top concerns of these young leaders. "Many tribes, including my own, depend on agriculture as a way of life..." shared one Essay Contest Finalist, Nicholas Naranjo, a high school senior of the Santa Clara Pueblo. Naranjo was one of the three essay finalists featured as the keynote speakers at the 2017 IAC Annual Banquet. Also featured as an essay finalist was Mihalani Mortenson, a high school junior of Hawaii, who expressed her concern for this legislation's ability to impact indigenous communities. "It gives them opportunities, restrictions, and guidance as to what they can do as Indigenous people," Mortensen expressed as she shared her passion for ensuring sustainable agriculture and cultural preservation within her community are both supported by the 2018 Farm Bill. Teresita Diaz, the third finalist representing the Ojibwe and Taino nations as a high school junior, emphasized that her involvement in advocating for the 2018 Farm Bill possesses the ability to help her community cope with the impact which it will have on all ages. "With our youth, I know a change will come for us... the 2018 farm bill could use some major improvements before it's signed, and our youth are the start of these improvements," Diaz states.

---

The IAC Essay Contest received submissions from more than 95 high school youth this year. Collaboration of applicants has developed a tremendous representation of the 2018 Farm Bill needs within our Indian communities, both on and off the reservation, across the country. The collection of essays are scheduled to be delivered to the USDA national headquarters later this month, as well as provided to the Native Farm Bill Coalition in support of their advocacy efforts.

The Intertribal Agriculture Council remains committed to carrying the voice of our youth in a way that has yet to be paralleled. A national force for youth leadership development, the IAC Executive Board supported the official seating of the Native Youth Food Sovereignty Alliance Board of Directors (see picture). These twelve (12) young leaders will serve as an advocating body for all of Indian Country's youth. To further illustrate their commitment to youth efforts, the Intertribal Agriculture Council unanimously seated a Youth Board Representative within their leadership; Zachary Ilbery (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma) has been chosen to serve as a voting member of the IAC Executive Board.

The momentum of the week has carried IAC Youth Programming into 2018 with large goals. Now having reached more than 500 youth, from over 150 tribes, this youth movement will continue to improve communities exponentially. With movement, comes change; and when the passion and energy of youth are directing the change, it can impact the world.



Native Youth Food Sovereignty Alliance seats first national Board of Directors and outlines the journey to food security at the 2017 Intertribal Agriculture Council Membership Meeting held December 11-14th, at the Hard Rock Hotel & Resort, Las Vegas, Nevada. Profile of the newly seated NYFSA Board of Directors available at [www.indianaglink.com/youth](http://www.indianaglink.com/youth).



2017 Essay Finalists Nicholas Naranjo, Teresita Diaz, and Mihalani Mortenson are recognized for their work by IAC Executive Director Ross Racine, Board President Harlen Beaulieu, and Farm Credit Council Representative Gary Matteson.

---

## **Farm Bill and My Community**

**by Nicholas Naranjo, Santa Clara Pueblo**

Many Tribes including my own depend on agriculture as a way of life. For generations, the people of Santa Clara Pueblo in New Mexico have been farmers and ranchers with cattle. This has been and continues to be a major source of income for us. We have been faced with many hardships on our lands due to the unique situations that come with living on the Pueblo. These hardships include loss of income from droughts, wildfires in our forest areas and poverty among families. Where most families depend on food programs to feed themselves. Along with other tribes, we depend on our way of life to sustain us and sometimes depend on programs administered by both state and federal governments to assist us. We as the native community and individually as native farmers and ranchers, are left behind and without a voice to speak. This is a direct result of the ever changing policies that are made by these agencies

An important policy to discuss is the 2018 Farm Bill. The last Farm Bill was approved in 2014 under President Barak Obama's Administration. Although it addressed some key issues important to native producers, communities and tribal governments, not all issues were beneficial to us. Now we have the opportunity, as native people, to step up and address these policies in the upcoming 2018 Farm Bill. By these efforts, our community will profit. Key topics that will have major impacts on our native communities are: Business/ Economic Development, Infrastructure and Community Development, Natural Resources/Conservation, Nutrition and the Veteran Grant Programs. And other issues that lie in the hands of the Office of the Secretary for the Department of Interior.

In Santa Clara Pueblo, key areas will impact us directly as livestock owners. Title I: Commodities for Livestock Producers, is the first example of this. Increases to indemnity payments for tribal livestock producers would allow us to secure market pricing for our livestock. This will also allow us to receive payments due to losses we have incurred from deaths that are significant and unique to the areas where our livestock are raised. We would then, be paid at an equal level with other livestock producers outside of Indian Country.

We must also ensure our eligibility for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program by adding provisions that allow protection for tribal producers that are outside of our control. The BIA is not fully aware of the environmental impacts and other issues that have a direct impact on tribal producers that vary by region. Exempting tribes from certain limitations for receiving payments on losses due to fires is a provision that is necessary to protect tribal producers. This currently only applies to public managed lands. Although Pueblo lands are not public they are not exempt from fires or other natural disasters that occur on public manage lands, and yet we are not eligible for assistance due to this criteria.

Tribes must also be aware that currently, Title I does not allow for base acreage of tribal lands to be calculated through consultation with tribes, which has a direct impact on what programs we are eligible for. This must be changed so that a proper accounting of base acres reflects what is specific

---

to each tribe. All land bases vary by region and should be properly reflected as such. With this change, it would significantly impact what certain producers are eligible in way of assistance to help with their livestock production.

Another key area for Santa Clara Pueblo would fall under Title II: Conservation. Our pueblo is encompassed by a large portion of forested land. This land has been hit by two major wild fires within the short span of 10 years. The first fire being the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000 and then the Las Conchas Fire in 2010. These fires damaged a significant portion of the forested area. And have brought negative impact on our livestock production because the cattle needs this land to graze. Although the tribe is currently in the process of restoring these areas, it will take a life time longer than my grandparents, parents and even my own before it can be as fruitful as it once was only 10 years ago.

In order to rebuild our lands, it is imperative that we actively participate in conservation programs so that our lands are managed properly for livestock owners. But in order for this to happen, we must change the way certain programs can be administered on trust land. Our tribes must be diligent when it comes to working with the BIA and NCRS so that we can apply for and receive funding to implement these conservation programs. This applies to individual assigned land and land used by the entire Pueblo.

Title IV: Nutrition under the Farm Bill of 2018 has the potential to help eliminate the degree of poverty that our pueblo faces. While Santa Clara Pueblo strives to ensure that our people are taken care of, we still experience poverty among many families. This issue impacts families where grandparents are raising their grandchild, elders with no extended families and also members without employment. Therefore, Title IV is very important. Many families depend on food programs to assist with supplementing what they cannot afford out of pocket. Although not always have these programs provided the necessary help needed by our members. Individual tribes, such as ours in Santa Clara Pueblo, should have the opportunity to administer some of these food programs directly. This would alleviate members having to go through the state to receive services through such programs as SNAP. Currently our tribe provides general assistance through our Social Services Program which is similar to TANF that the state provides to needy families. By being able to administer the SNAP program directly through our Pueblo this would alleviate the burden on tribal members when seeking services outside of the Pueblo.

Through the Food Distribution Program administered on Indian Reservations, we should be allowed the flexibility to purchase and provide food to our native communities that are grown and raised locally. These products are native to our diet. And would ensure that the food distributed to tribes are of the highest quality and come directly from the supplier to the program, rather than through a middle man. And would mean that our people would have a more balanced and nutritious meal to provide to their families.

---

As a livestock owner in the Pueblo, the Farm Bill is a very important tool that would help me in my livestock operation. With the wide range of policies that make up the bill, the importance of making change at various levels would affect Indian Country significantly. As a voice for my Pueblo and myself, my role is very important, whether it be as a participant in advocating for change at a local level or nationally. But also as an educator in my community to re-teach the importance and significance of what it means to be a farmer and rancher, so that my tribal government can lobby for change not only for the Pueblo but for the betterment for all of Indian Country.

Santa Clara Pueblo has been at the forefront of most tribes when it has come to lobbying and testifying before Congress in Washington, DC. These issues have included Transportation within Indian Country, the 99 Year Land Lease and Declaring Natural Disasters on Tribal Lands so that funding can come directly from FEMA to the tribes. My family has been strong advocates on important issues affecting our Pueblo by holding positions in Tribal Government that allows them to voice their concerns. We are active participants in programs related to farming and ranching and more recently in supporting a Pueblo funded program on Food Sovereignty through a grant from First Nations.

As an active member with the IAC Youth Alliance I have had the opportunity to advocate for the organization from a youth perspective on issues that affect Indian Country within the Farm Bill. My chaperon and I will continue to advocate on these important issues within my community by educating members and tribal government on the importance of the Farm Bill and the need to participate in the USDA Census Count for Agriculture that directly impacts programs that are offered to Indian Country. As well as work with our Governor and Tribal Council and the Inter-Public Relations Office in our Pueblo to address the needed changes in the Farm Bill that affect native producers across all of Indian Country.

Although Santa Clara Pueblo is just a small voice within Indian Country it can powerful through advocacy and supporting livestock owners and farm producers. To truly be sovereign, we as native people must show our independence by how well we can provide for our people through our native way of life.

## **What does the 2018 Farm Bill Mean to Us?**

*by Teresita Equay Diaz, Ojibwe & Taino*

"What is a farm bill? A farm bill is an act that is passed by U.S. congress and signed to be a law by the current president of the U.S. Farm bills were originally created to help struggling farmers after the great depression. The farm bill governs federal farm, food, fiber, forestry, and rural policies and programs. To the government, it is a food and agriculture policy tool. New farm bills are created approximately every five years. The most recent farm bill was passed on February 7, 2014. It expires in september 2018. A new farm bill is now in the making.

---

The new 2018 farm bill is said to be cutting around 38 billion dollars out of farm support programs. Some of these programs include, commodity and trade programs, nutrition assistance programs, and crop insurance. For a farm bill that was originally created to help struggling farmers; it's crazy how much it is going to change in 2018. It has almost made a complete U turn in succeeding in its actual purpose. Being that a lot of farmers in rural areas (like Indian country) are already in tight situations, this new farm bill is like a big fail for rural development.

Now I will be addressing the effects of multiple things in the farm bill that will affect Indian Country. For one, it's planned that grant and loan money programs for rural water systems and waste programs are going to be cut. Tribal lands are in eligibility for these programs. These programs help with funding that goes towards the improvement and cleaning of water and sewage systems in small populated areas. Without these programs there may not be access to clean drinking water, and on my reservation we have never been known to have clean drinking water. I am afraid that without these programs our water might be even more undrinkable than it is right now. Water is life.

Another thing that is going to affect my reservation due to the farm bill is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) eligibility being toughened up, and 25% of its funding being gone within 10 years. SNAP helps low-income families and individuals purchase food to feed them and their family. Currently the max amount of money a family of four can get in food stamps is \$649. That is roughly only \$5.40 for each family member to eat in a day. Also big retailer stores like Walmart where most people on my reservation shop can be affected by the reduction in SNAP users. Another thing is that in rural areas there isn't a lot of jobs and unemployment is a serious issue therefore people may be at risk of having little to no food. I personally know what it's like to have little food in the house at home and it's hard. So let me just say, It's in my highest hopes that no one on my reservation is left to be hungry after this farm bill.

In order to change the things that I mentioned above in this future farm bill I need to take action. So to take an active role in insuring that my community is represented by the 2018 farm bill, I have an idea of creating a YouTube channel. This YouTube channel will have a really catchy name and will be run by mostly Native American youth from my community. To start off, the youth, including me can post Facebook statuses and newspaper ads to get people to subscribe to us and watch our videos. We can create a youth council to be in charge of the YouTube channel and also be the voice of our youth on our reservation. For the video aspect, we can do informative and persuasive speeches, short skits, and even interviews with tribal producers to tell about the farm bill and what we need to see in it. The videos will be interesting and in a way, fun to watch because it is young people telling the world what they want to see. It's important coming from our youth because the youth are our future. We can do fundraisers to travel to get our voice to reach more, and advertise for our YouTube channel. We can have monthly meetings to brainstorm and discuss on how we can improve and help. We can also find people to sponsor us. It just takes one person to stir the pot. This

---

is something I'm passionate about and have been doing a lot of brainstorming and talking to different people on their thoughts on the bill and what can help change it for the better.

To successfully reach this active role in my community my chaperone and I must take certain steps. These steps include getting support, networking, and also getting as many of our youth in our community involved as we can. We can do this by creating the community garden into a project for our youth. Our youth take pride in helping others so by doing this and telling them about the farm bill and how it can affect us, and our families. This will help the youth want to get involved. Having support is one of the most important things that leads to success. With the support of others, especially role models in our community, it encourages us to give it our all. In a tough situation it's easier to give up when there is no support. Networking is just as important as getting support. Networking is a way to be seen. Networking connects you to many different people from all over, which would allow my chaperone and I to have a better chance at succeeding.

Last but not least our youth. Without our youth I think my plan would fall apart. People want to know what the youth think. The youth are the most important part of making sure we are represented in this 2018 farm bill. With our youth I know that a change will come for us. Overall the 2018 farm bill could use some major improvements before it's signed, and our youth are the start of these improvements.

## **2018 Indian Agriculture Farm Bill**

*by Mihalani K. Mortenson, Native Hawaiian*

"The 2018 Farm Bill was renewed to benefit the Native people through the Indian Food and Agriculture Initiative. The Farm Bill and all of the main components that it covers are ways to help our communities to be sustainable in a legal way. I am from Hilo, Hawaii in a small community called Keaukaha. I am a Junior in High School. My community is not that involved in agriculture but we have elders in our community who have a lot of knowledge and experiences about agriculture and being able to sustain themselves. While talking with the elders, I found that something common that they all talked about, and is an obvious need in the community, is more interest and involvement in agriculture from the people living there. In my community, the Farm Bill is needed so that we can first, involve the youth in Agriculture because we are the future leaders. The next step, I think, would be to branch out to the parents because they are the main support systems for the youth and their futures.

How does the Farm Bill impact Indian Agriculture? In the making of the new 2018 Farm Bill, NRCS mentioned that "Finding the balance between regulatory and voluntary policy options to address environmental issues for agriculture that will play a big part in the debate for the new 2018 farm bill and also, keeping in mind the native tribes all around the world." Now that the new Farm Bill is here, we see that they have addressed the environmental issues for agriculture. I think that

---

through the Agriculture summits and this essay competition, they have kept in mind all of the tribes around the world. Overall, the Farm Bill impacts Indian Agriculture in a way that allows them to see what they need in their community, then do something about it while keeping in mind the things in the Farm Bill to ensure they are doing these things in a legal way. All ten of the components in the Farm Bill keep agriculture in mind for those tribes, nations, and people all over the world.

We, the people of Hawaii, have people, places, and whole communities that are impacted by the Farm Bill. In the nutrition section of the Farm Bill, it explains that approximately 25 percent of Native Americans receive some type of federal food assistance, and in some tribal communities, participation is as high as 60-80 percent. This is something that has a big impact in my community because there are many people, mostly natives who are on EBT, Snap, The Food Bank and so many more assistance programs because poverty is a huge thing in Hawaii. Poverty is the main reason that nutrition is a big deal in our community. Many do not have the money to buy fresh food so instead, they buy the cheap and unhealthy food. This is a great opportunity for us to start something like a community garden for example. One of the key points in the Farm Bill is, "The Rural Development (RD) programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are essential for rural and reservation tribal communities to develop and improve declining infrastructure systems while spurring economic development and job creation in tribal communities." This applies to my community because from my understanding it talks about using the land spur the economic development and to use that as jobs for Hawaiians. It also said, to decline the infrastructure systems. This means to decline development on our sacred land used for sustainability. On Hawaii, the state is trying to install a thirty-meter-telescope on top of our sacred mountain. The installment of this telescope can ruin the waterways in the mountain which is our main source of water. More on the cultural side, our ancestors and chiefs are buried on the mountain which is a problem in the culture. We do not necessarily have programs that are impacted by the Farm Bill but we can create those programs.

As youth leaders, it is important for us to be the active leaders in the community. I will take an active role in ensuring that my community is represented in the 2018 Farm Bill by taking the knowledge that I learned about sustainable agriculture from the Pacific Summits in Reno, Nevada and Sacramento, California. I will also take home the things I learned in the Youth Agriculture Summit in Arkansas as well. Like I mentioned in the beginning of my essay, we need to star with the youth and I know that one way to do that is to get an agriculture project within the schools. I know that on my island alone, there are a few schools with programs like 4-H and FFA. We need to start these types of educational programs. I think that a way to start it off would be to start a school garden and plant the native plants and actually serve it in lunch and eventually work up to making sure that all of the vegetables and fruits that are served for lunch and breakfast are locally grown in the school garden by the students. Branching out from the youth is support from the parents. I think that one way that parents can support their child is by being involved. On the Big Island, where I live, we have

---

a lot of empty lands that could be used for farming. While talking with my parents, they explained to me that there are several acres of land being sold to people with 50% or more Hawaiian blood. If you meet the requirements you can get the land after the legal allegations. If the native parents got the land, it shows their involvement and it can help the youth to expand all of the hard work that they put into agriculture. If we follow the rules and qualifications and understand the Farm Bill, then we can make this happen. But it needs to start with the youth and for us youth here in the IAC and NRCS leadership programs to encourage our fellow natives to have the drive to be sustainable and use the resources in the Farm Bill.

The first step my chaperone and I must take to ensure we reach the active role in our community effectively is to start small by ourselves and to reach out to others in small ways and to introduce to them what we are trying to do. For example, when I first heard of the Farm Bill, I had no idea what it is or how it benefits my community. From that, I think that we need to explain what exactly the Farm Bill is and break it down to the main topics that it covers. Following that, the second step is to actually do something. We need to help everyone and educate them on how to be sustainable. Going back in history to the time when we had a Queen who ruled our land who was suddenly overthrown and taken over by the state, Hawaii became a developed state and as time passed, we became dependent on the products that are imported and all of the new technology. If I were to ask any of the elders who know our culture, "Can the Hawaiian people sustain themselves if we were to somehow become a sovereign nation again?". They would probably say no. I believe that we can become sovereign again if we all can relearn the techniques our ancestors used to survive. Also, I think that the youth who attend the agriculture summits can take back the knowledge and ideas from the other tribes and nations and take it home. We need to change the fact that our people and land have all become too industrialized to change but it is our job to change that.

The Farm Bill 2018 should include a way to encourage more youth because the youth to take a stand in their community. We are the foundation of all the evolvement of Native agriculture in all communities that eventually, will involve our parents and adult leaders to guide and support us. The Farm Bill is meant for Native Indian Tribes and Nations. It gives them opportunities, restrictions, and guidance as to what they can do as indigenous people. We need to choose to use it to our advantage or not. Personally, in my community, we need to focus more on the health of the people that goes along with financial problems, and rural development on our land. My role as a youth leader learning about being sustainable, I need to make a difference in my community to prevent poverty and help improve the nutrition that the people intake, as well as using the undeveloped land to make sure that we can eat nutritious foods. As a Native Hawaiian and a leader in my community, I know that my community needs the help and support provided in the Farm Bill in order to thrive and sustain ourselves.