



Press Release

Partnerships Strengthen National Tribal Emergency Management Council's Efforts to Deliver Essential Aid to Tribes Affected by COVID-19 By Air, By Land and By Sea

For Immediate Release

SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Washington, January 22nd, 2021 – In May of 2020, the Executive Directors of the NTEMC and Farmer Frog learned that many of the Tribes were not receiving fresh food through the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farmers to Families food program. That is when Zsafia Pasztor, of Farmer Frog and Lynda Zambrano, of NTEMC, put their heads together, jumped into action and responded in a way that will go down in history.

One Single Facebook post leads to many Miracles

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Vincent Cooke, General Manager for the Makah Indian Tribe sat awake into the early hours of the morning worried about the Tribe, closed borders and readily accessible food and resources for the nation's people. Vincent saw a Facebook post for free potatoes at Farmer Frog. Not knowing anything more than that, he reached out to Zsafia Pasztor seeking additional information.

Zsafia had a love for the Tribes that dated back many years. As an immigrant of Hungary, Zsafia understood what it meant to have to go without food. What Vincent did not know was that Zsafia had started planting Ozette potatoes, a culturally relevant food to the Makah Tribe, in the fall of 2019. She had been waiting very patiently for them to sprout. In the early morning of May 3rd, 2020, she raced out to the garden to find that the Ozettes had finally sprouted. Zsafia tells the story, "When I saw the hundreds of sprouts had finally come up, I knew that they were calling out to their people. I knew right then that we needed to find a way to get food to the Makah Nation."

Lynda Zambrano, Executive Director of the National Tribal Emergency Management Council (NTEMC) received a call from Vincent Cooke asking for assistance to deliver potatoes and onions to the small coastal Tribe that had closed its borders. The NTEMC coordinated with Farmer Frog for the distribution of food to the Tribe. The NTEMC also provided PPE and other disaster supplies to the Makah Nation.

In the course of working through the logistics to deliver supplies to the Makah, Zsafia and Lynda learned that many Tribes were not receiving fresh food through the USDA Farm to Family Program. Zsafia and Lynda began the work of connecting several hundred partners throughout the country to bring about the delivery of food and supplies to Tribes and Tribal communities throughout a thirty-three state area.

Grandmother Cedar Food Coalition

Farmer Frog began site work at Paradise Farm in 2015. The old farmhouse that stands on the property was originally built in the late 1800s on the culturally significant and traditional lands of Washington State Tribes. The property had been logged twice over the past century, but in all that had been done on the property, one enormous cedar tree survived. This tree has now become known by all as Grandmother Cedar.



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When the National Tribal Emergency Management first visited the property, it became very clear that there was a great deal of history at play in that moment. The Cedar Tree in the Pacific Northwest represents life. It represents survival. The partnerships that were being forged to fight COVID-19 were developing at the same rate as the spread of the virus, under the protective limbs and branches of this one tree.

Fresh Food Coalition of Sustainable Communities

One of the largest socio-economic side effects exasperated by the virus became food insecurity. As more Tribes closed their borders, access to fresh food became more difficult. In order to continue to combat both the virus and the need for fresh food, Zsofia and Lynda assembled an all-star cast of Executive Directors and organizations that shared the same passion and heart as they for helping their respective communities. In most recent days, the partnership continues to grow, to now include the wonderful work of Badger Farms/INSP, Culturas Unidas Food Network, EastWest Food Rescue, and the Emergency Volunteer Air Corps. The Fresh Food Coalition has now distributed more than 35 million pounds of food, millions of dollars of personal protective equipment and supplies to more than 3 million recipients.

More about the Partners

Farmer Frog Farmer Frog started with a food garden at one school in 2009. Today, they support over a dozen school gardens in the state, work with several sites in urban and rural communities, and are developing several farms. They cultivate programs, school gardens, and hands-on learning to nurture communities. They operate under the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization Foundation for Sustainable Community and are registered to do business as Farmer Frog.

Badger Farms/INSP Brandy Badger is the Executive Director of the International Nutritional Sustainable Partners (INSP). INSP works closely with all partners to source food, sponsor pop up events throughout Washington State to provide food to communities, churches, food banks and to people without homes and shelter.

Culturas Unidas Alvaro Morales is the President of Culturas Unidas Food Network, and provides cross-country, long haul transportation of food and supplies to many communities throughout a several state area. Providing fresh food to many of our Tribal communities and the entire Hispanic Puget Sound community would not have been possible without Culturas Unidas Food Network

EastWest Food Rescue George Ahearn, President of EastWest Food Rescue, saw how COVID-19 was impacting the agricultural community. George was able to acquire food from the farmers, and then partner with Farmer Frog and NTEMC to distribute, saving the potatoes and onions, but more importantly, saving small farmers.

General Aviation Partners Sky Terry, NW Regional Emergency Services Director, EVAC Emergency Volunteer Air Corps has coordinated more than 100 volunteer pilots to help distribute resources to Tribes from California to Alaska, and as far east as Montana.

National Tribal Emergency Management Council Lynda Zambrano is the Executive Director of both the NTEMC and the local Northwest Tribal Emergency Management Chapter. For all media inquiries, contact Lynda@ntemc.org. The website can be found at NTEMC. Follow the NTEMC at [NTEMC's Facebook Page](#).

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