



## Building the Case for *Let's Move!* in Indian Country

### **Indian Country has the Highest Rates of Obesity**

- In 2009 American Indian/ Alaska Native (AI/AN) children had the highest prevalence of obesity (20.7%), followed by Hispanic (17.9%), non-Hispanic white (12.3%), non-Hispanic black (11.9%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (11.9%) children. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009)<sup>1</sup>
- Since 2004, AI/AN children are the only ethnic or racial group that has shown a significant increase in obesity rates (1.7%). (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009)
- AI/AN infants and children (residing both on and off reservations) have a greater risk in most major health risk categories in comparison to all other races, including high weight-for-height body ratios and inadequate nutrient intake (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009)<sup>2</sup>

### **Persistent Poverty and Food Insecurity are Part of the Problem**

- Native Americans suffer food insecurity and hunger at twice the rate of the general population. (Food Research and Action Center, 2000)<sup>3</sup>
- USDA found that from 1995 to 1997, 22.2 percent of Native American households were food insecure, meaning they did not have enough food to meet even their basic needs. In fact, the situation was so severe that USDA determined that from 1995 to 1997, one or more members of these households suffered from moderate to severe hunger, with 8.6 percent of households experiencing both food insecurity and hunger. (Food Research and Action Center, 2000)
- According to the 2009 *Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System* (PedNSS) data, early one-third of the 3.7 million low-income children aged two to four years surveyed were obese or overweight, and 541,000 were obese. (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009)

### **Need to Create a Healthy Start on Life**

- AI/AN infants and children are disproportionately overweight in comparison to all other races. 20 percent of AI/AN children living on or near reservations are overweight and 16 percent of AI/AN children off reservations are overweight in comparison to only 13 percent of all WIC children. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009)
- Studies demonstrate that any amount of breastfeeding may significantly reduce the number of AI/AN preschool children who are overweight or obese. Only 21 percent of AI/AN breastfed children age 3-4 years were overweight compared to 52 percent of AI/AN children age 3-4 that were formula fed. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009)

### **Families and Households Play an Important Role**

- According to one study, Mescalero Apache children with obese mothers were found to be 2.5 times more likely to be obese than children of non-obese mothers. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009)

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2009, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/data.html>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Report on *Obesity and American Indians/Alaska Natives*, Peggy Halpern, Ph.D., 2007, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/07/ai-an-obesity/report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Food Research and Action Center, "WIC in Native American Communities: Building a Healthier America," pp. 7-8, 2000. [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=ED459050&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=ED459050](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED459050&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED459050)

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