FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Groundbreaking conference planned to expand health policy advocacy in Indian Country

“Fertile Ground II” is an outcome of recent historic philanthropic roundtable on Indian nutrition

Minneapolis, Minn. – The American Heart Association (AHA) and the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) are co-sponsoring a major convening to explore opportunities to advance policy work relating to nutrition, food access, and other work to improve health outcomes in Indian Country. Scheduled for May 2-4, 2016, in Minneapolis, “Fertile Ground II: Growing the Seeds for Native American Health” will bring together Native American leaders, Native youth advocates, and national philanthropic organizations to develop solutions to address the health crisis in Indian Country.

Participants are encouraged to come ready with ideas to support achieving priorities within the following discussion areas:

- **Traditional Healthy Foods**: Production, Food Sovereignty, and Nutrition
- **Empowering Our People**: Youth Leadership and Intergeneration Holistic Health
- **Creating Healthy Communities**: Child Care, Schools, and Communities

Tribes, health experts, and funders are encouraged to participate. Email fertileground@heart.org for more information on the event.

Native Americans face among the highest rates of childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes, and other chronic diseases in the United States. Without a dramatic and sustained investment in shifting these health trends, the future health and wellbeing of Native peoples and tribal nations are in jeopardy. “Fertile Ground II” seeks to explore Native-led advocacy and policy changes that can help address this health crisis.
“Fertile Ground II” is a continuation of the SMSC and AHA’s 2015 partnership to accelerate the development of a national framework to improve Native American nutrition and health. In October 2015, the two organizations convened representatives from 41 national philanthropic organizations to discuss the food crisis in Indian Country at “Fertile Ground: Planting the Seeds for Native American Nutrition and Health.” At the conference, participants agreed on concrete steps to develop solutions to this critical issue, including holding a second convening focused on Native-led advocacy and policy work.

Through Seeds of Native Health, the SMSC’s national philanthropic campaign to improve Native American nutrition, the tribe has brought together top experts and philanthropists in an effort to develop permanent solutions to this serious problem. The campaign also includes grant-making, education, and research efforts related to Native nutritional health.

“Fertile Ground II: Growing the Seeds for Native American Health” is also sponsored by the Marguerite Casey Foundation and MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger.

About the American Heart Association
The American Heart Association is devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – the two leading causes of death in the world. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The Dallas-based association is the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. To learn more or to get involved, call 1-800-AHA-USA1, visit heart.org or call any of our offices around the country.

About the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community is a federally recognized, sovereign Indian tribe located southwest of Minneapolis/St. Paul. With a focus on being a good neighbor, good steward of the earth, and good employer, the SMSC is committed to charitable donations, community partnerships, a healthy environment, and a strong economy. Having donated more than $325 million since opening its Gaming Enterprise in the 1990s, as well as providing more than $500 million in economic development loans to other tribes, the SMSC is the largest philanthropic benefactor for Indian Country nationally and one of the largest charitable givers in Minnesota. The Seeds of Native Health campaign to improve the nutrition of Native Americans was launched in March 2015 with a $5 million contribution from the SMSC.

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