

Moving Toward Food Sovereignty:

Assessing Food Systems on Montana's Indian Reservations

Prepared by Linda Howard

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There's a growing movement in Indian Country as Native people are producing their own traditional foods on their own lands to sustain themselves, their families, and their communities. After hundreds of years of influence and policy which has disrupted or destroyed traditional food practices, they are taking control of their own food systems and building more sustainable economies. Known as "Native Food Sovereignty," the movement may hold the key to breaking the cycle of hunger, poor nutrition, and obesity-related diseases in Native American communities, as well as creating jobs and positive self-esteem. This paper assesses the current situation and the potential for food system projects on the seven Montana Indian reservations and offers suggestions for moving forward.

During February and March, I traveled to the reservations to visit with key individuals who are involved in health and agriculture education, food production and processing, school lunch and other feeding programs, public assistance programs, cultural preservation, and economic development. In total, I met with 72 individuals – with as few as 4 informants on Rocky Boy's and as many as 17 on Crow. One interview was conducted by phone for an individual that wasn't available on the date of my visits. I also met with Jason Smith, Indian Affairs Coordinator in the Governor's Office, Gerald Gray, Chairman of the Little Shell Tribe, and Cheryl Gust, a diabetes and health education specialist at the Indian Health Service office in Billings.

The purpose of the interviews was to determine what is currently being done in communities in terms of food production and consumption of local foods, where gaps exist and what can be done to fill those gaps, the barriers to filling those gaps, which

people are or should be involved, and what resources are needed. Discussions revolved around the following questions.

- What are the major challenges facing this community in terms of food?
- What efforts are available in your community to address this issue?
- Is there any planning for further efforts surrounding this issue?
- Who do you consider to be the leaders in solving food security issues in your community?
- How important of an issue is hunger in your community?
- How aware is your community of the need for proper nutrition?
- Rate the importance of the different sources of food in your community.
- How easy would various activities (from food distribution to starting new businesses) be to change?
- What are the obstacles to change?

Finding Common Themes

Montana reservations are varied geographically, as well as in their traditions, values, tribal leadership and infrastructure, but there are also many similarities between them. Several themes emerged during the assessment, the most notable being the large gap between "how important of an issue is hunger" and the "awareness of the need for proper nutrition," and the major sources of food.

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the "most important," communities rated the hunger issue in the 4 to 5 range (average = 4.5), while the awareness of the need for proper nutrition was rated in the 2 to 3.2 range (average = 2.4). Hunger can be attributed to many sources, including poverty and poor access to food, but it can also be

related to bad food choices. One need only to reflect upon the historical trauma suffered by Indian people to figure out why this might occur.

Government policies removed Native people from their most valuable agricultural land and natural resources, which brought about a loss of traditional knowledge of Native food systems, an unhealthy relationship with food, and even a disconnect from the land. When first confined to reservations, diets were restricted to non-indigenous foods, which would eventually become a diet consisting almost entirely of refined, processed foods low in protein and complex carbohydrates, but high in simple carbohydrates and trans-fats.

While there is much to be done to bring Native peoples back to a healthy diet, nutrition educators, dietitians, diabetes outreach programs, and many health care professionals are doing good work in this regard. In a world of highly processed and convenience foods, coupled with lack of fresh nutritious food and high poverty rates on reservations, changing eating behaviors is a difficult task.

Every reservation rated the following as “very important” sources of food: 1) school lunch programs, 2) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (commonly known as food stamps), 3) Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) (commonly known as commodities), and 4) food banks (where they exist). Other sources of food that rated high were grocery stores (where they exist), convenience stores, and sharing. There were many discussions about these sources of food. Following are some of the comments.

Meals provided at school (and summer feeding programs) are sometimes the only nutritious meals that a child receives. School food service directors realize the

important role they play in providing nutrition to these children and are doing as much as they can to meet the needs of their community. In many communities, 100% of students are on free or reduced meal programs, so meals are served to everyone without question. Teenagers and older students do not usually receive as many meals at school --sometimes due to poor attendance or pride/shame. While younger children are not embarrassed to carry home a backpack of food for the weekend, this is not “cool” for older students. (The “Backpack Program,” sponsored by the Montana Food Bank Network, is operated by some school districts.) A heartbreaking comment made during one meeting was, “The teenagers wander from one relative's home to another -- wherever they can find food -- until they wear out their welcome.” While the developing bodies and brains of teenagers are in dire need of nutrition, they appear to be the ones most falling through the cracks.

SNAP benefits are meant to “supplement” other sources of income. In many cases, however, it is the only source of funds. Benefits begin on the first of the month and generally run out long before the month is over. Commodities distributors and food bank directors say their busiest time is the second half of each month. Sometimes, that “second half of the month” is quite lengthy. One food bank director said, “Starting today, I will be very busy until the end of the month.” That was March 11th.

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), commonly known as the commodities program, is a Federal program that provides USDA foods to low-income households, including the elderly, living on Indian reservations. The variety and nutritious value of these foods has improved greatly over the years. One FDPIR director who had worked for the program for 40 years said, “In the beginning we had

only seven items: sugar, flour, rice, peanut butter, cheese, vegetable oil, and powdered milk. Today we have over 70 items, including fresh fruits."

While grocery stores are an important source of food, few reservation communities have more than one store. These stores are small, providing a limited selection of items at higher prices than in larger communities. To drive prices down through competition, or simply to provide a single grocery option, some tribes operate their own stores. This is currently happening in Browning, Rocky Boy, and Frazer.

Locally-grown foods, family gardens, hunting, and harvesting wild foods ranked low on the list of food sources.

Six reservations are classified as "food deserts" by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with the Flathead Reservation being the one exception. Food deserts are defined as regions lacking in fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods. Usually found in impoverished areas, this shortage is largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers. While food deserts are often short on whole food providers, they are heavy on convenience stores that provide a wealth of processed, sugar, and fat laden foods.

Barriers to improving local food systems that ranked high in each community included: 1) lack of money, 2) lack of leadership, 3) lack of human resources, and 4) the high rate of poverty.

Those most perceived as leaders in the food sovereignty issue are: 1) schools and colleges, 2) community or non-profit organizations, and 3) tribal government. There was a notable lack of volunteerism within most communities. This includes volunteers for community gardens, 4-H programs, and food banks.

Defining Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty is defined as “the inherent right of a community to identify their own food system.” A food system includes all processes and infrastructure involved in feeding a population: growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consumption, and disposal of food and food-related items.

According to the First Nations Development Institute, tribal communities that exhibit food sustainability and food sovereignty are those that:

- Have access to healthy food;
- Have foods that are culturally appropriate;
- Grow, gather, hunt and fish in ways that are sustainable over the long term;
- Distribute foods in ways so people get what they need to stay healthy;
- Adequately compensate the people who provide the food; and
- Utilize tribal treaty rights and uphold policies that ensure continued access to traditional foods.

Moving Forward

The best outcome of the food sovereignty approach occurs when there is a completely locally-controlled effort, but there may be opportunities for outside agencies to play a facilitative role. As the state agency whose mission it is to "enhance and develop agriculture and its allied industries," the Montana Department of Agriculture can play a role in the Native Food Sovereignty movement.

This community assessment has accomplished the first step in developing a statewide movement by 1) identifying key players on each reservation and 2) beginning a dialogue about food security and potential projects. The Department can continue to

strengthen local involvement, build a sense of common purpose and understanding, develop an agenda for action, and inspire people and organizations to work together.

Each Montana reservation should further explore issues surrounding local food systems change. They should look for solutions to food and agricultural problems, hunger, and availability of safe and nutritious food. To find solutions will take the work of diverse interests, such as tribal leaders, health and nutrition educators, agricultural producers, economic development specialists, and food distributors.

This report contains a profile for each reservation, including contacts made, discussion notes, and suggested steps to take. If the Department chooses to be involved in the Native Food Sovereignty movement, there are definitely some locations where the dialogue can be continued and assistance can be provided.

Examples of prospective projects include:

- Continue the conversation with the multi-faceted groups we convened at Crow and Northern Cheyenne, as well as the Food Committee in Browning.
- Begin a dialogue with the Chippewa Cree Wellness Coalition on Rocky Boy and the new wellness group in Fort Belknap.
- Provide technical assistance and support, through the tribal extension agent and Conservation District, to the new Crow producers who are “taking back their land.”
- Provide assistance to the Fort Belknap Livestock Marketing Co-op and the Rocky Boy Cattlemen's Association.
- Provide technical assistance and encouragement to the 90+ Native farmers on the Fort Peck Reservation to work pulses into their crop rotation.

- Assist the Island Mountain Development Group in conducting a community food sovereignty survey and open a food co-op store in Hayes.
- Assist reservations that need food banks, farmers markets, and commercial kitchens.
- Help with the development of a new agriculture curriculum at Stone Child College.

Overall, the goal for the Department should be to raise awareness that communities can do something about their food situation. Raising awareness can be done through a variety of tactics, such as:

- Introducing information about the issue through presentations and media;
- Visiting and investing community leaders in the cause;
- Reviewing existing efforts in the community to determine target populations and the degree of success of the efforts;
- Conducting public forums to develop strategies from the grassroots level;
- Utilizing elected leaders and influential people to speak to groups and participate in local radio and television shows; and
- Beginning library or Internet search for additional resources and potential funding.

The Importance of Sovereignty

Sovereignty is a word that resonates with Native people. It is the most fundamental concept that defines the relationship between the U.S. government and governments of Native American Tribes. The U.S. Constitution recognized tribal governments and included the language that guarantees the existence of Native

American sovereignty today. Food sovereignty is about having control of one's own food systems. It's about self-reliance, empowerment, and community revitalization.

For Native Americans, sovereignty serves as the vital foundation of existence. At the recent Native Food Sovereignty Summit in Wisconsin, Muckleshoot tribal member Valerie Segrest said, "When Natives defined sovereignty during treaty making, they defined the access to food. We would be nobody without food. We need to decolonize our diets and revitalize our traditional food culture. We see food as much more than a commodity. Food teaches us without saying a word. Food sovereignty and access to our food is about mental health and self-worth."

Successful Tribal Projects

The magic formula for building a food system has not yet been found, but some tribes are finding ways to take control of their food sources and revitalize their communities. One of the best ways to inspire people is to tell success stories from other communities. Montana tribal populations can learn from the experiences of other Native communities.

The Oneida Nations of Wisconsin is leading the charge in the Native Food Sovereignty movement. They operate an orchard, cattle ranch, bison herd, bean cannery, and corn farm. They supply their schools and elder programs with food, and profit from what is left over. Not only are they seeing economic rewards, but they know their citizens are receiving better nutrition. Jesse Padron, Oneida Nations Food Service Director, said the Oneida slogan is, "Pay the doctor or pay the farmer."

The Western Apache are reviving their diet and their connection to their homeland by cataloging all their native plants – including the traditional names and

uses. The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project is promoting the development of healthy lifestyles and self-esteem. Kids come into the program believing that diabetes is inevitable, but they learn otherwise through gardening and nutrition education.

There are many, many more examples of successful projects – from seed banks to cookbooks, hoop houses to farmers markets. Even the small successes are meaningful in Native communities.

Timeframe for Activities

This table provides a suggested list of communication strategies and timeline. The cost for these activities is minimal, most involving just time and travel. An important part of implementing an outreach and action plan is to development measurements to determine effectiveness.

Increase Community Awareness	Date
Develop informational fact sheets	May-June 2014
Develop PowerPoint	May-June 2014
Develop web pages and social media	May-June 2014
Address State Tribal Economic Development Council	July 2014
Make community presentations	Ongoing
Address individual tribal councils	As scheduled
Co-host a Food Sovereignty Summit	October or November 2014
Program Development	
Meet again with key informants	May-September 2014
Build new partnerships	Ongoing
Provide technical assistance & educational opportunities	Ongoing
Research	
Inventory agriculture producers	May-September 2014
Explore additional partnerships	May-September 2014
Research cost/availability of groceries/food	May-September 2014

Building Partnerships

The Department should also seek out partners from the public and private sector to join the Native Food Sovereignty effort. These partners could assist with outreach, funding, and co-hosting a food sovereignty conference. Potential partners are the Intertribal Agriculture Council, Montana Indian Business Alliance, Tribal Leaders Council, Indian Health Service, Office of Public Instruction, and Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Another important partner is the First Nations Development Institute. From an economic development perspective, they work on food security, food distribution, food access and utilization, cultural and traditional knowledge, tribal and federal policy, value-added and market access, improving capacity, entrepreneurship, and empowerment. They also provide individualized and customized technical assistance.

Conclusion

With adult diabetes rates at 17-33% and childhood obesity rates at near 50%, there is a health crisis of epidemic proportion among Montana's Native population. Returning to traditional and nutritious foods is a compelling and effective way to improve health outcomes, an important step toward restoring Native food systems, and a way to create employment.

The issue of food sovereignty is a complex one. It impacts economic development, health services, education, social services, the environment, transportation, cultural preservation, and many other issues. The real issue, however, is about security and independence. Winona LaDuke, Anishinabe activist and former vice presidential candidate, stated it profoundly and succinctly when she said, "You can't say you're sovereign if you can't feed yourselves -- if you can't take care of your people."

Blackfeet Reservation

Community Profile

Size and population: Of the approximately 15,560 enrolled tribal members, there are about 7,000 living on or near the reservation. 1.5 million acres.

Tribal Government

The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council consists of nine members elected from four districts of the Blackfeet Reservation. These districts include Browning, Heart Butte, Seville and Old Agency Districts. The tribal business council serves four-year terms. Terms are staggered, and elections are held in June of every even numbered year. The next general election is set for June of 2014, but no one really knows if it will be a “legally sanctioned” election.

Tribal College

Blackfeet Community College

Access to Food

Grocery Stores on reservation: Teeples IGA and Glacier Family Foods in Browning

Nearest Grocery Stores off reservation: Cut Bank, Shelby, Great Falls and Kalispell

Food Bank: Yes Location: Browning

Findings

There is a Browning Food Group, consisting of a wide variety of enthusiastic individuals involved in health, education, vo/ag programs, and food services. A cooperative project between the community and schools, their plan is to repair the greenhouse at the former high school and operate a free community garden in the heart of Browning. A Vista volunteer will recruit and coordinate volunteers. They will also incorporate a comprehensive evidence-based curriculum on food and nutrition into the schools and hope to start a youth-based farmers market. On March 5th, I learned that this group did not receive the large grant for which they had applied, so they are definitely in need of funding.

A new Facebook group called “Blackfeet Gardens” has recently formed. Many people have joined the group and are busy sharing ideas about what to grow in their personal gardens. There was a full-day gardening class offered at BCC on May 13th.

There is a hydroponic garden at BCC. In addition, a community garden at the college employs three interns.

Contacts

Rosemary Cree Medicine, Tribal Health Director
Kirsten Anderson, IHS public-health dietitian
Sharon Silver, Public health educator
Nonie Woolf, Retired IHS dietitian
Mike Tatsey, High school Vo-Ag instructor
Latrice Tatsey, Extension agent at BCC
Chuck Pilling, Principal of K.W. Bergan Elementary
Les Peterson, Tribal prevention program
John Rouse, Browning Schools, Superintendent
Lynne Keenan, Browning public schools Food Service Director
Rose Marceau, Food Bank Director
Vic Connelly, Commodities Warehouse Director

Contacts for the future:

Verna Billideaux, MSU Extension Agent
Katie Bremner, SNAP Educator

Community Climate

How important are the following sources of food for people in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “does not exist” and 5 being “very important”)?

- 5 Grocery store
- 5 Convenience store
- 5 Sharing
- 5 School lunch programs
- 5 Food stamps
- 4.7 Food bank
- 4.7 Commodities
- 4 Hunting/gathering
- 3.3 Family garden or farm

Other sources: Bountiful Baskets, CACFP, WIC, grocery stores in Great Falls and Kalispell

How easy would the following to be change in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “very easy to change” and 5 being “very difficult to change”)?

- 2.7 Food preparation (including nutrition education)

- 2.7 Harvest food locally (including hunting and fishing)
- 2.7 Transporting (moving and delivery of foods)
- 2.7 Incorporating Native food traditions and customs into your food system
- 3 Growing food locally (including poultry and livestock)
- 3 Distribution (stores, food banks, meal programs)
- 3.3 Creating new private businesses
- 3.7 Creating new business run by the tribe
- 4 Processing (turning a raw commodity into an ingredient or finished product)

What are the obstacles to change?

- 9 High rate of poverty
- 9 Lack of human resources
- 6 Lack of money
- 6 Lack of time
- 6 Community unaware of need
- 6 Lack of leadership/direction
- 4 Remoteness of community

What are the major challenges facing this community in terms of food?

Remote location and high poverty rate are the two biggest challenges. In addition, rocky soil, high winds, and reservation dogs make gardening a challenge for those that wish to do it. The volatile situation with tribal government (Tribal employees do not consistently get paid.) has put additional pressure on the food bank.

Knowledge about the Issue

How important of an issue is hunger in your community? 4.7

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not very important” and 5 being “a very great concern”)?

How aware is your community of the need for proper nutrition? 2.7

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not very aware” and 5 being “very aware”)?

How knowledgeable are community members about this issue?

Community members are very aware of the diabetes risk among their population, but have not changed their diets to prevent the disease. The three convenience stores in town continue to serve a great deal of pop and greasy foods like corn dogs, chicken, and jo-jo potatoes.

Community Efforts

The summer feeding program uses a food truck to go to three different locations within the community and serve lunch there. This has greatly increased their participation

rates. They could use two more trucks for this purpose. They also need consistent staff or volunteers to help -- perhaps somebody with community service hours. They serve 500 kids each day. The Food Service Director will do more publicity this year such, as a story in the newspaper, posters, announcement on the school marquee and on the radio station. They are going to put a bell or music on the truck and hand out sunglasses and beach balls to make it a really fun activity.

The high school Vo-Ag program butchers a buffalo at school each year. They cut it up and make dried meat in the classroom. They learn about the various organs and cuts of meat.

Leadership

Who do you consider to be the leaders in solving food security issues in your community?

- 9 Schools/colleges
- 8 Community or non-profit organizations
- 7 Health care professionals
- 6 Tribal government
- 6 State and local agencies
- 2 Religious groups
- 2 Volunteers

Other: business/economic development organizations

How much of a concern is this issue to the tribal leadership?

Tribal government is in a "volatile state" right now. This topic is not a high priority for them right now.

What projects would you like to see happen?

Community garden and greenhouse renovation

Suggestions for Moving Forward

The Food Group, with its combination of ag, health care, and education professionals, is a determined group. We should stay in contact with them and see how we can move the project forward.

Crow Reservation

Community Profile

Size and population: About 75 percent of the Crow tribe's approximately 10,000 or more enrolled members live on or near the reservation. 2.2 million acres.

Tribal Government

The four members of the Executive Branch serve a four year term. Elections for all Executive Branch positions are held every four years in the month of November.

Tribal Enterprises

The reservation's economy is derived from the rich coal resources of the Tribe's land, which is used directly to support livestock and other operations. One mine is now in operation and providing royalty income and employment to tribal members. The Crow operate only a small portion of their irrigated or dry farm acreage and about 30 percent of their grazing land. They maintain a buffalo herd. I heard conflicting information about the size of the herd – ranging from 300-2,000.

Tribal College

Little Big Horn College

Ag Production

Most ag production land is being leased to non-Natives for grazing.

Access to Food

Grocery Stores on Reservation: IGA in Hardin

Nearest Grocery Stores off Reservation: Billings and Sheridan, Wyoming

Food Bank: yes Location: Hardin and Garryowen

Findings

There is potential for many Crows to begin their own livestock operations. They will need technical and financial assistance to do that. Three people from Little Big Horn College attended the Food Sovereignty Summit and will be looking for funding for new food projects.

Contacts

Todd Wilson, Tribal Health Director
Jackie Stewart, Tribal Council, liaison for Health Dept.
Shannon, Tribal Health
Birgit Graf, LBHC Agriculture Instructor
Liz Von Essen, LBHC Greenhouse Program
Robin Stewart, Tribal Conservation District
Jeremy Not Afraid, Crow Agency NRCS
Linda Connor, Hardin Food Bank Director
Suzie Kelly, Centerpoint, Garryowen
Redstar Price, WIC Program, Lodge Grass
Margo Stops, WIC Program, Lodge Grass
Shirley Redding, MSU Extension SNAP Nutrition Educator, Hardin
Laurie Lutt, MSU Extension Family and Consumer Sciences/4-H, Hardin
Breanne Uffelman, MSU Extension Master Gardener Program, Hardin
Latonna Old Elk, LBHC Extension Agent
Patrice Stewart, Hardin Food Service Director
Rob Hankins, Hardin School District Superintendent

Others to contact in the future:

Ada Bends, Boys & Girls Club Chief Professional Officer (CPO)
Jason Cummins, Principal, Crow Agency School
Tiffany White Clay, LBHC ag instructor
David Small, LBHC administrator
Sandy Watts, Superintendent, Big Horn County Schools

Community Climate

How important are the following sources of food for people in your community?
Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “does not exist” and 5 being “very important”)?

- 4.2 Grocery store
- 4 Convenience store
- 4 Family garden or farm
- 4.4 Hunting/gathering
- 4.2 Sharing
- 5 School lunch programs
- 5 Commodities
- 5 Food stamps
- 5 Food bank

Other sources: WIC

How easy would the following be change in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “very easy to change” and 5 being “very difficult to change”)?

- 2.4 Transporting (moving and delivery of foods)
- 2.6 Harvest food locally (including hunting and fishing)
- 3 Distribution (stores, food banks, meal programs)
- 3.2 Food preparation (including nutrition education)
- 3.4 Incorporating Native food traditions and customs into your food system
- 3.6 Creating new private businesses
- 3.6 Processing (turning a raw commodity into an ingredient or finished product)
- 3.8 Creating new business run by the tribe
- 4 Growing food locally (including poultry and livestock)

What are the obstacles to change?

- 5 Lack of money
- 4 Lack of leadership/direction
- 4 Lack of human resources
- 4 High rate of poverty
- 2 Community does not want change
- 2 Remoteness of community
- 1 Lack of time
- 1 Community unaware of need

Other: impact of historical trauma

Knowledge about the Issue

How important of an issue is hunger in your community? 4.6

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not very important” and 5 being “a very great concern”)?

How aware is your community of the need for proper nutrition? 3.2

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not very aware” and 5 being “very aware”)?

What type of information is available in your community regarding this issue?

WIC nutritionists are located in a Lodge Grass. They said the program is really underutilized. Many clients don't understand they can be on WIC and SNAP at the same time. They use word-of-mouth and referrals to get the word out about WIC. Even though most of their young clients use Facebook frequently, they are reluctant to enter the world of social media marketing. They tried texting appointment updates, but clients change their cell phone numbers frequently.

Tribal Health has a Tobacco and Diabetes program.

How do people obtain this information in your community?

Several people were unaware of the nutrition education classes and wondered how they were advertised. They said community events (such as basketball games) draw lots of people and are a great way to get the word out about nutrition classes and other health events.

Community efforts (programs, activities, policies, etc.)

Hardin food bank served 9,000 people in January 2014. 85% of their clients are Native. They spend \$400 a month for the backpack program for three grades, which amounts to 32 backpacks each week.

Hardin schools serve 35,000 meals each month. They have two teachers, who are talking about building a greenhouse. 70% Native students at Hardin High School and a little bit higher than that districtwide.

Jeremy Not Afraid has been encouraging the producers he works with to consume some of what they grow. That means not selling all their cows, but saving a beef or half a beef for their family.

People don't want community gardens; they want home gardens. The tribal college generally receives requests to help prepare 30 to 40 gardens, but does not have enough manpower to take care of all of them.

Several people said they had tried individual and community gardens before. A group of volunteers came down from Bozeman and tilled family garden lots and helped plant, but when the volunteers didn't come then the locals didn't have the equipment and manpower to get their gardens going. There is also a problem with water on the reservation. Many wells have very high mineral content.

Is there any planning for efforts/services going on in your community surrounding this issue?

The tribal greenhouse program is applying for food community grant next year.

The Tribe is establishing a new Conservation District, replacing one that used to be in existence.

The Centerpoint organization would like to see a high-profile farmers market at the intersection of Interstate 90 and Highway 212.

The Crow radio station just got an FCC license and will begin broadcasting soon. The station is called Crow Voices; it is 91.1 FM. They will be looking for programming content, such as advice on how to grow gardens.

Leadership

Who do you consider to be the leaders in solving food security issues in your community?

- 8 Tribal government
- 8 Community or non-profit organizations
- 6 Schools/colleges
- 6 Health care professionals
- 4 Religious groups
- 4 Volunteers
- 4 State and local agencies

Other: grass root, individuals

Are you aware of any proposals or action plans that have been submitted for funding that address this issue in your community?

The Hardin school food service director has applied for Vista volunteers for the summer feeding program.

Miscellaneous Notes:

In the 1920s and 1930s, the government encouraged the Crows to showcase their veggies at Crow Fair. There was fierce competition among the Crow to grow the best and largest vegetables. Suzie Kelly was able to obtain photos from Time Life and wants to use them to decorate the school.

Everyone who visits the college greenhouse tells the story of their grandparents' garden. They all loved it!

Tribal Councilwoman Jackie Stewart, said, "My grandma had a garden. My uncles went hunting. We sat down to dinner. Now, everybody wants instant everything. There is too much microwavable and junk food."

There are currently 3,000 land leases of Natives to non-Native producers. There is a movement by Natives to not renew those leases, and start production themselves. These beginning producers then have the problem of not having equipment, capital, and perhaps the knowledge to do a good job of producing. Some of the leases are being turned into a crop sharing arrangement.

There is an elders group called the 107 Committee. Many of them are interested in raising the sheep that may be donated by a group in Connecticut.

A big challenge is the infrastructure/means to get purchase local food for school lunch program.

Suggestions for Moving Forward

We met with a group at Little Big Horn College that was comprised of food bank directors, school lunch director, LBHC ag instructors, extension agents, and others involved in agriculture. It was the first time that many of these folks had met and/or spoken with each other. We had a great conversation and, by the end of the meeting, several folks had expressed the desire to meet again. With three people from Crow attending the food sovereignty summit, I'm sure they have even more to talk about now. I suggest trying to pull together a second meeting and get more ideas going. That meeting should include some of the school administrators and the Boys and Girls Club director who missed our first meeting. Although we met with the Tribal Health staff separately, they should also be a part of the bigger community group.

Have Marty contact Patrice about purchasing local meat. She also wants to receive information about the lentil burgers and any recipes or menu ideas utilizing Native foods.

Walt has already attended the Ag and Science Fair and been in touch with Jeremy Not Afraid and Robin Stewart.

Flathead Reservation

Tribes: Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes.
Combination of Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai.

Community Profile

Population and Size: Of the approximately 7,753 enrolled tribal members, about 5,000 live on or near the reservation. 1.2 million acres

Tribal Government

Tribal Council consists of ten councilmen. Council members serve four-year staggered terms. Elections are held in October and December of every other year.

Tribal Enterprises

The tribes operate a full-service resort and casino in Polson, which is overseen by S&K Gaming, a tribal corporation. The Tribes also operate S&K Electronics, which manufactures various computer components and circuits, S&K Technologies, and S&K Holding, which operates a number of income-producing enterprises as well as offering business loans to tribal members.

Tribal College

Salish Kootenai College

Access to Food

Grocery Stores on Reservation: several options

Nearest Grocery Stores Off Reservation: Missoula, Kalispell

Food Bank: Yes Location: Polson

Findings

While the Flathead Reservation seems to have the highest “quality of life,” in terms of poverty and unemployment rates, the childhood obesity rates are very high. At two schools where height/weight measurements were taken, obesity rates were at 42% and 46%. Much more needs to be done in the way of nutrition and physical education. Because of a 4-day school week, the physical education program and one recess a day has been cut.

The human resources and knowledge are available to make things happen on the Flathead Reservation, but the various parties don't seem to be talking to each other. Perhaps a comprehensive food sovereignty plan could pull all the resources together.

Contacts

Ginger Pitts, MSU Extension Agent, Nutrition Educator
Mike, Summer Feeding Program
Virgil Dupuis, Tribal Extension Agent
Tammy Matt, Tribal Community Health Division Manager
Roger McClure, Student Services Director, SKC
Melissa Mock, Boys & Girls Club, Ronan
Aric Cooksley, Boys & Girls Club, Ronan
Fatherhood Program: Gary, Sue, Gene, Rob/Charles
Jan Tusick, MMFEC Director
Nicki Jimenez, MMFEC's FoodCorps Service Member

Future contacts:

Rene Kittle, MSU Extension
Jason Moore

Community Climate

How important are the following sources of food for people in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being "does not exist" and 5 being "very important")?

- 5 Grocery store
- 5 Sharing
- 5 School lunch programs
- 5 Commodities
- 5 Food stamps
- 4.5 Convenience store
- 4.5 Hunting/gathering
- 3 Family garden or farm
- 3 Food bank

Other sources: Mack Days filet program

How easy would the following to be change in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being "very easy to change" and 5 being "very difficult to change")?

- 2 Transporting (moving and delivery of foods)
- 2.5 Processing (turning a raw commodity into an ingredient or finished product)
- 2.5 Growing food locally (including poultry and livestock)

- 2.5 Creating new business run by the tribe
- 2.5 Creating new private businesses
- 2.5 Food preparation (including nutrition education)
- 3.5 Harvest food locally (including hunting and fishing)
- 4 Distribution (stores, food banks, meal programs)
- 4 Incorporating Native food traditions and customs into your food system

What are the obstacles to change?

- 6 Lack of money
- 4 Lack of time
- 2 Community unaware of need
- 3 Lack of leadership/direction
- 1 Remoteness of community
- 1 High rate of poverty

Knowledge about the Issue

How important of an issue is hunger in your community? 4

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not very important” and 5 being “a very great concern”)?

How aware is your community of the need for proper nutrition? 2

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not very aware” and 5 being “very aware”)?

Community efforts (programs, activities, policies, etc.)

Virgil Dupuis has been very active in the past – obtaining a variety of grants, running a community garden and greenhouse on campus, and creating a community calendar with recipe and food ideas. The Forestry Club sells the vegetables from the garden for a fundraiser.

Four permaculture gardens exist on the reservation. This regenerative and self-maintained agricultural system, which is modeled from natural ecosystems, is a principle that should be shared with other reservations.

The Tribal Fisheries Program conducts Mack Days each year to reduce the number of lake trout in Flathead Lake. Many fish caught during this event (24,544 in 2014!) are available to tribal members (and others) through donations to food banks and the Poverello Center in Missoula.

The commodities program is underutilized, which might indicate that hunger is not as big of an issue on this reservation as others.

There is a population of young newcomers that are dedicated small farming (3-5 acres in size). They need capitalization. Local guys are “cows and grain. They don’t want to take care of squash.”

The Fatherhood Program, funded by DPHHS grant, tries to provide a better outcome for kids by teaching parents financial literacy, health relationship skills, and prepare them for jobs.

Tribal Housing is considering a community gardens program.

Leadership

Who do you consider to be the leaders in solving food security issues in your community?

- 5 Tribal government
- 4 Community or non-profit organizations
- 4 Schools/colleges
- 3 Volunteers
- 3 State and local agencies
- 3 Health care professionals
- 2 Religious groups

Would the leadership support additional efforts?

If presented with the statistics, the Tribal Council might make support “soft policy” initiative to deal with the childhood obesity issue. They would probably “support healthy eating,” but not want to infringe on individual rights.”

Suggestions for Moving Forward

Pulling all the individual entities together to unify resources could be beneficial. It would also be good to address the tribal council to educate them about food and hunger issues.

Fort Belknap Reservation

Tribes: Assiniboine, or Nakoda, and Gros Ventre, or A'aninin

Community Profile

Size and population: Combined enrollment is approximately 4,000. The reservation is about 652,000 acres

Tribal Government

Fort Belknap Indian Community Council consists of the President and the Vice President, who are elected to serve a four year term. Eight Council Members, consisting of four Gros Ventres and four Assiniboine members are elected every two years. The President and Vice President appoint a Secretary Treasurer, who serves four years. The President and Vice President will serve until 2017.

Economy and Tribal Enterprises

The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the tribe are the major employers. The Little Rockies Meat Packing Company, Inc. is the first tribally owned, USDA-inspected meat packing facility in the U.S. The Reservation is working to develop tourism and marketing Native American artisans. The tribes manage a 400-head buffalo herd. Antelope, bird and gopher hunts are available; licenses and guides are required. Island Mountain Development Group, a tribally owned corporation with an independent Board of Directors, runs 17-19 enterprises and employees many people. Their operations include Little Rockies Meat Packing, Little Smokies Café, and lending companies.

Tribal College

Aainah Nakoda College. Two-year associate's degrees in the Arts and Sciences are offered, along with one-year certificates.

Ag Production

The main industry is agriculture, consisting of cattle ranches, raising alfalfa hay for feed and larger dry land farms. The Fort Belknap tribal buffalo herd was started in 1974 with 35 animals. They now have over 400. There is also a livestock marketing co-op.

Access to Food

Grocery Stores on reservation: Albertsons in Harlem, Martin's in Hays

Nearest Grocery Stores off reservation: Havre, Malta, Lewistown

Food Bank: No

Findings

Three people from Island Mountain Development Group attended the Food Sovereignty Summit – Dana, Diona, and Len. They will be doing a food assessment survey on the reservation to determine needs. They are currently pursuing an idea of a food co-op in Hays.

There is a new health and wellness committee meeting monthly.

Contacts

Hillary Maxwell, MSU Extension Nutrition Educator

Liz Werk, MSU Extension

Gail Whiteman, MSU Extension Agent

Marlene Werk, Director of Hays Boys and Girls Club, rancher and Board Member of Ft. Belknap Cooperative

Manny Gonzalez, Tribal College Extension Agent

Cheryl Gonzalez, Tribal College Instructor, Native Plants

Michelle Fox, Island Mountain Development Group

Dana Piyette, COO, Island Mountain Development Group

Diona Buck, Administrative Assistant, Island Mountain Development Group

Ruth Burleigh, Tribal Diabetes Program

Future Contacts:

Brian Hammett, Tribal Diabetes Program

Patti Quisno, Tribal Council

Velva Doore, Tribal Health Director

Community Climate

How important are the following sources of food for people in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “does not exist” and 5 being “very important”)?

- 5 School lunch programs
- 5 Food stamps
- 4.7 Grocery store
- 4.2 Commodities
- 3.7 Hunting/gathering
- 3.2 Sharing
- 3.1 Family garden or farm
- 2.7 Convenience store
- 1 Food bank

Other sources: grocery stores in Havre and Malta, Martin's grocery in Hays, Bountiful Baskets in Harlem and Chinook.

How easy would the following to be change in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being "very easy to change" and 5 being "very difficult to change")?

- 2.2 Transporting (moving and delivery of foods)
- 2.2 Processing (turning a raw commodity into an ingredient or finished product)
- 2.2 Food preparation (including nutrition education)
- 2.5 Distribution (stores, food banks, meal programs)
- 2.7 Creating new business run by the tribe
- 3.2 Incorporating Native food traditions and customs into your food system
- 3.5 Harvest food locally (including hunting and fishing)
- 3.9 Growing food locally (including poultry and livestock)
- 4.2 Creating new private businesses

What are the obstacles to change?

- 6 Lack of money
- 4 Lack of time
- 4 Lack of human resources
- 3 Community unaware of need
- 2 Lack of leadership/direction
- 1 Remoteness of community
- 5 High rate of poverty

What are the major challenges facing this community in terms of food?

Gardens are difficult in some areas, such as Dodson, because of the bad mosquito problem. Gail tried to get the tribal mosquito abatement program to work on the problem in Dodson, but she was told it was "too rural." There is a threat of West Nile virus in that area of the state, so people don't get outdoors much during mosquito season. Gail heard horses screaming in pain because of so many mosquitoes and cattle were clumped up and not grazing.

They had four community gardens, but people were not committed to the project and didn't follow through. Need to hire motivated people to do the work. It takes gas money to get someplace to volunteer in the garden and then they have to bring their own food for their workday.

Knowledge about the Issue

How important of an issue is hunger in your community? 4.4

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being "not very important" and 5 being "a very great concern")?

How aware is your community of the need for proper nutrition? 2.5

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not very aware” and 5 being “very aware”)?

Community Efforts (programs, activities, policies, etc.)

Fort Belknap Livestock Marketing Co-op is now meeting monthly. Through Western Center for Risk Management Education, they got a mini-grant that is being used to survey producers about record keeping and marketing. They will try to get a bigger grant for technical assistance next. Bud Walsh is President. Toby Werk is Vice President.

Tribal College has a greenhouse and a big garden.

Liz organizes a "Glorious Gardens tour each year. There is some great gardening knowledge in the community.

What programs would you like to see?

Through Intertribal Ag Council, get Native American beef into Indian casinos.

They need a food bank and would like to start a farmers market.

They need a rototiller and an individual who could work 10 hours a week during tilling season.

Gail is still assessing how to do 4-H, but feels that the adults who would volunteer are already overworked.

The community needs a commercial kitchen for presentations and healthy cooking classes. It should be designed by a professional -- probably somebody from off the reservation. A mobile kitchen that travels to the south end of the reservation would be nice.

Liz teaches meat drying and food preservation using the kitchen at the Diabetes Center. It has all electric stoves; gas would be better.

Leadership

Who do you consider to be the leaders in solving food security issues in your community?

- 5 Tribal government
- 1 Volunteers
- 3 State and local agencies
- 4 Community or non-profit organizations

- 2 Religious groups
- 5 Schools/colleges
- 5 Health care professionals

Other: IMDG

Suggestions for Moving Forward

Any ideas how to solve the mosquito abatement problem in Dodson that aggravates livestock and makes gardening difficult?

Albertsons in Harlem charges \$1.89 for a loaf of white bread and \$5.29 for whole-grain. Another person told me that it is \$3.79 for the whole-grain, because she uses the WIC coupons. Regardless, the distributor who sells Wheat Montana bread to the Albertson's warehouse in Salt Lake City told me that he sells white and whole-grain bread for the same price. Albertson's is clearly jacking up the price, because they can take advantage of the people using the WIC coupons.

Presentation to Tribal Council and meeting with the wellness group would be a good idea.

Fort Peck Reservation

Tribes: Assiniboine, or Nakona, and Sioux, or Dakota

Community Profile

Size and population: About 6,800 Assiniboine and Sioux live on the Fort Peck Reservation, with another approximately 3,900 tribal members living off the reservation. The reservation is over 2 million acres in size.

Tribal Government

The Fort Peck Tribal Executive Board consists of a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary/Accountant, a Sergeant-at-Arms, and twelve (12) Board Members. All members of the governing body, except the secretary-accountant are elected at-large every two years. Elections will be held in 2015.

Economy and Tribal Enterprises

An industrial park in Poplar houses a variety of enterprises, including metal fabrication and production sewing. Other industries, including an electronics manufacturer, operate on the reservation. Farming, ranching and oil extraction also play a part in the reservation economy.

Tribal College

The Fort Peck Community College offers associate's degrees in the Arts and Sciences, along with one-year certificates.

Ag Production

The Tribes have a buffalo herd, 800 head of cattle, and 800 acres of hay. There are approximately 90 Native producers, mostly growing hay, wheat, and cattle. Not many are growing peas and lentils.

Access to Food

Grocery Stores on reservation:

Albertsons in Wolf Point, small grocery store in Frazer

Nearest Grocery Stores off reservation:

Williston, Glasgow

Food Bank: No (The one in Wolf Point closed. Nearest one is in Culbertson.

Only Commodities Warehouse: Poplar

Findings

The Tribes seem to be focused on how to best take advantage of the fracking boom. They are not putting much energy into other issues now.

There is a lot of farming, but Native farmers are generally not growing pulses as a rotation crop.

Contacts

Mary Plante, SFSP, Poplar
Wendy Becker, MSU Tribal Extension Agent, Poplar
Janice Moran, OPA Supervisor, Wolf Point
Julie Flynn, Food Service Director, Frazer School
Sherrie Benson, Science Teacher, Frazer School

Contacts for the future:

Linda Nielsen, Board of Livestock/Grains of Montana
New College Extension Agent

Community Climate

How important are the following sources of food for people in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “does not exist” and 5 being “very important”)?

- 5 Grocery store
- 4.5 Convenience store
- 3.3 Family garden or farm
- 4 Hunting/gathering
- 4.5 Sharing
- 5 School lunch programs
- 4.5 Commodities
- 5 Food stamps
- 1 Food bank

Other sources: Wolf Point Farmers' Market (accepts SNAP EBT)

How easy would the following be change in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “very easy to change” and 5 being “very difficult to change”)?

- 2.5 Incorporating Native food traditions and customs into your food system
- 2.5 Distribution (stores, food banks, meal programs)
- 3.3 Transporting (moving and delivery of foods)

- 3.3 Processing (turning a raw commodity into an ingredient or finished product)
- 3.3 Food preparation (including nutrition education)
- 3.3 Harvest food locally (including hunting and fishing)
- 4.2 Growing food locally (including poultry and livestock)
- 4.2 Creating new business run by the tribe
- 4.7 Creating new private businesses

What are the obstacles to change?

- 6 High rate of poverty
- 6 Lack of human resources
- 5 Community unaware of need
- 5 Lack of money
- 4 Lack of time
- 4 Lack of leadership/direction
- 4 Remoteness of community

What are the major challenges facing this community in terms of food?

Poverty, apathy, addiction

Knowledge about the Issue

How important of an issue is hunger in your community? 4.5

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not very important” and 5 being “a very great concern”)?

How aware is your community of the need for proper nutrition? 2.5

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “not very aware” and 5 being “very aware”)?

Community efforts (programs, activities, policies, etc.)

Tribal enterprises opened a little grocery store in Frazer, last year because they needed the store there, but it is often closed or out of gas. They have not had good success with community gardens. The school superintendent at Frazer had a garden at her house, but she moved. The extension agent at the Fort Peck Community College used to do a community garden, but she also left. There is a community garden in Wolf Point, but I wasn't able to find out who is coordinating it. The science teacher in Frazer is starting a community garden this year. She received a school improvement grant to buy heirloom seeds for it. They don't see a lot of volunteerism.

Leadership

Who do you consider to be the leaders in solving food security issues in your community?

- 5 Schools/colleges
- 5 Health care professionals
- 3 State and local agencies
- 2 Community or non-profit organizations
- 2 Religious groups
- 1 Tribal government
- 1 Volunteers

How much of a concern is this issue to the tribal leadership?

Tribal leaders are currently focused on how to best take advantage of the fracking boom.

Suggestions for Moving Forward

Educate the Native farmers about pulse production.

Northern Cheyenne Reservation

Community Profile

Approximately 5,000 Northern Cheyenne, along with members of other tribes and with non-Native Americans, live on the reservation. 445,000 acres

Tribal Government

Tribal Council consists of 5 members elected from each of the following districts: Ashland, Birney, Busby, Muddy, and Lame Deer. The President and the members of the Tribal Council serve four year staggered terms.

Tribal Enterprises

No tribal enterprises. Major employers include the St. Labre Indian School, the federal government, tribal government, power companies and construction companies. The education system, farming, ranching and small businesses contribute to the economy.

Tribal College

Chief Dull Knife College. Associate's degrees in the Arts and Sciences are offered, along with vocational programs.

Access to Food

Grocery Stores on reservation:

IGA in Lame Deer

Nearest Grocery Stores Off Reservation: Forsyth, Hardin, Broadus, Billings, Miles City

Food Bank: No

Findings

There used to be a Women's Circle cooking class run through IHS, which they are interested in reviving. This is a traditional way for Native women to learn new skills and share the workload. The cooking class would take place in the church kitchen, but would move to a particular woman's home if that woman said she needed help with a picky eater in the family. All the women would help her find good foods for that person. They would take certain utensils that the family could keep after the class. Each spring, the women would plant a garden. Need funding for the program.

Lame Deer needs a food bank and a safe walking route from Muddy Creek (a housing area) into town, so children can safely come in for the summer feeding program. They currently have to walk along the highway – a very busy Hwy. 212.

Contacts

Janelle Timber-Jones, OPI
Lane Spotted Elk, Boys and Girls Club
Geri Small, Boys and Girls Club
Tom Mexicancheyenne, IHS
Tonya Watson, Office of Public Assistance
Deb Fix, WIC Nutritionist
Denise, Headstart Food Service Director
Leonard Little Wolf, Headstart Director

Contacts for the Future:

Evie Bixby, Food Service Director in Lame Deer
Henry Thompson, Dull Knife College Extension Agent
Ryhal Rowland , MSU Extension Agent

Community Climate

How important are the following sources of food for people in your community?

On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “does not exist” and 5 being “very important”

- 5 Grocery store
- 5 Sharing
- 5 School lunch programs
- 5 Commodities
- 5 Food stamps
- 4.5 Convenience store
- 4.5 Hunting/gathering
- 3 Family garden or farm
- 1 Food bank

How easy would the following to be change in your community?

On a scale from 1-5, with 1= very easy to change and 5 = very difficult to change

- 2.5 Food preparation (including nutrition education)
- 3 Processing (turning a raw commodity into an ingredient or finished product)
- 3.5 Growing food locally (including poultry and livestock)
- 3.5 Creating new business run by the tribe
- 3.5 Creating new private businesses
- 4 Transporting (moving and delivery of foods)
- 4 Distribution (stores, food banks, meal programs)

- 4 Incorporating Native food traditions and customs into your food system
- 4.5 Harvest food locally (including hunting and fishing)

What are the obstacles to change? (number of responses to each topic listed)

- 6 Lack of money
- 3 Community unaware of need
- 3 Lack of leadership/direction
- 3 Remoteness of community
- 3 High rate of poverty
- 1 Lack of human resources

Other: limited space available, no community building located at hub of reservation

What are the major challenges facing this community in terms of food?

People don't know how to prepare fresh foods. They prefer the greasy chicken and corn dogs at the convenience store. High rate of poverty and homelessness (perhaps as high as 45%)

Knowledge about the Issue

How important of an issue is hunger in your community? 4

On a scale from 1-5, with 1 = not very important and 5 = a very great concern

How aware is your community of the need for proper nutrition? 2

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being "not very aware" and 5 being "very aware"

Community Efforts (programs, activities, policies, etc.)

Yvonneda "Henry" Thompson, Director of Cooperative Extension Service at Chief Dull Knife College, was just named a "Financial Literacy All Star" by the First Nations Development Institute (FNDI). With a grant from FNDI, Henry started a VITA program. In 2012, VITA prepared 500 tax returns with over \$1 million in facilitated refunds for community members. Henry didn't attend our meeting in Lame Deer on February 12, because she was helping prepare taxes that day.

There used to be some community gardens, but that concept didn't work well. Nobody showed up to work in them. There is some interest in family gardens, as a way to supplement food source. One young man asked the extension agent (Riyhal) if she could help him start a garden, because he wanted to do something to help his mom provide for the family.

Leadership

Who do you consider to be the leaders in solving food security issues in your community?

- 6 Tribal government
- 4 Schools/colleges
- 4 State and local agencies
- 4 Community or non-profit organizations
- 3 Health care professionals
- 3 Volunteers
- 2 Religious groups

Suggestions for Moving Forward

The Women's Circle seems the most logical project to move forward. Work with Tom Mexicancheyenne to learn more about the program and funding needs.

FWP and Department of Transportation have grants for walking trails and safe routes to school. Janelle Big Timber or Lane Spotted Eagle would be the logical community members to pursue this.

Denise from Head Start requested information about obtaining more local foods to serve. She is also interested in lentil recipes.

Several people at the meeting requested a follow-up meeting and further discussion about this topic.

Rocky Boy's Reservation

Tribe: Chippewa Cree

Community Profile

Size and population: Of the approximately 15,560 enrolled tribal members, there are about 7,000 living on or near the reservation.

Unemployment rate: 67.9% in 2012. Half of the reservation population is under 21. There will be a need for many new jobs in the future.

Tribal Government

The Chippewa Cree Business Committee is the governing body of the Tribe. The eight Council members and Chairman are elected at large; serving four years on staggered terms. Elections are held in the fall of every even numbered year.

Tribal College

A two-year college, Stone Child College offers associate's degrees in the Arts and Sciences. There are future plans for a cultural center on campus.

Ag Production

30+ Native cow/calf producers on the reservation. Typical scale: 150 pairs

Access to Food

Grocery Stores on reservation:

Grandma's Market in Rocky Boy agency owned by the tribe
Mary's Market (owned by Mary St. Pierre) is located next to Stone Child College

Nearest Grocery Stores off reservation:

Havre, Great Falls

Food Bank: Yes Location: Stone Child College

Findings

There are 30+ Native ranchers with their own cattlemen's association. Mary Ruth St. Pierre, the tribal extension agent, is very active teaching, mentoring youth, and helping

new producers get started. The Board of Regents has given a directive to the tribal college to create more agriculture programs. The tribe has offered a 10-acre irrigated parcel on Dry Fork Farms to Mary Ruth St. Pierre and Joan Mitchell to use for whatever they deem appropriate. They are contemplating a vegetable/herb farm.

Contacts

Joan Mitchell, Planning Office
Bo Walker, Planning Office
Mary Ruth St. Pierre, Tribal Extension Agent
Dr. Nate St. Pierre, Stone Child College President

Contacts for the future:

Barb Stiffarm, Vibrant Futures Program Director

Community Climate

How important are the following sources of food for people in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “does not exist” and 5 being “very important”)?

- 5 School lunch programs
- 5 Commodities
- 5 Food stamps
- 4 Grocery store
- 4 Sharing
- 4 Food bank
- 3 Family garden or farm
- 3 Hunting/gathering
- 1 Convenience store

How easy would the following to be change in your community?

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being “very easy to change” and 5 being “very difficult to change”)?

- 1.7 Harvest food locally (including hunting and fishing)
- 2.5 Food preparation (including nutrition education)
- 2.5 Incorporating Native food traditions and customs into your food system
- 3.4 Growing food locally (including poultry and livestock)
- 3.4 Transporting (moving and delivery of foods)
- 3.4 Distribution (stores, food banks, meal programs)
- 3.4 Creating new business run by the tribe
- 4.3 Processing (turning a raw commodity into an ingredient or finished product)
- 4.3 Creating new private businesses

What are the obstacles to change?

- 4 Lack of money
- 4 Lack of time
- 4 Lack of human resources
- 4 High rate of poverty
- 2 Community unaware of need
- 2 Lack of leadership/direction

What are the major challenges facing this community in terms of food?

Very limited choices, high prices, lack of fresh produce, consumers want to purchase fatty non-nutritious food

Other notes about the community:

Food trucks often go around at noon to sell lunch items, usually as fundraisers for various organizations. They rarely offer healthy food choices, because the public doesn't want that.

In 2011, a new wellness center opened next door to the health clinic. For the first time, residents have access to a swimming pool, basketball court, walking track and gym equipment.

The president of the tribal college wants to "create a culture of hope" and make the college a resource for cross-cultural understanding.

Vibrant Futures lists these as their economic development goals for the Rocky Boy Community:

- Locally-grown food distribution system
- Each tribal department self-sustaining
- Increase the number of Indian businesses (grocery store, gas station)
- Establish stores and shopping centers closer to Rocky Boy or Box Elder
- Establish local electricity/gas/phone companies
- Increase honest, respected leadership

Knowledge about the Issue

How important of an issue is hunger in your community? 5

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being "not very important" and 5 being "a very great concern")?

How aware is your community of the need for proper nutrition? 2

Using a scale from 1-5, with 1 being "not very aware" and 5 being "very aware")?

Community efforts (programs, activities, policies, etc.)

Stone Child College Board of Regents has recently given the college a directive to develop more ag programs, possibly some sort of agricultural degree. Mary Ruth will be working on new curriculum and they will be hiring new instructors.

Active 4-H club (called Miywasin, which means “good” in Cree), grandparent programs, Positive Indian Parenting classes, Junior Gardening curriculum

The Chippewa Cree Wellness Coalition meets monthly.

There is also a Community Development Committee.

There is a Rocky Boy Cattlemen’s Association, which need to do a better job of marketing.

Mary Ruth has some young producers participating in the USDA Micro Loan program and receiving technical assistance from Intertribal Ag Council

They have an active Equestrian Club and Rodeo Club

Someone puts on a horse camp each summer.

What projects would you like to see happen?

Nate St. Pierre, college president, would like to see a youth-driven farmer’s market.

A mobile meat processing unit would be good for allowing ranchers to process their meat on site and sell it to schools and other consumers.

The community currently needs a nutritionist.

Leadership

Who do you consider to be the leaders in solving food security issues in your community?

- 4 Tribal government
- 2 Volunteers
- 1 State and local agencies
- 1 Community or non-profit organizations
- 1 Religious groups
- 3 Schools/colleges
- 3 Health care professionals

Suggestions for Moving Forward

Have Walt Anseth contact Mary St. Pierre. She was unaware of loan program. She is aware of YACC, but has not nominated anyone yet. She loved the idea of having YACC come to the reservation and be more tribally focused.

Possibility of assisting Rocky Boy Cattleman's Association with organization and marketing efforts.

Possibility of working with Bob Quinn. Bob has contacted the tribal college and talked to them about his research. It sounded like he wanted them to get involved somehow.

Jon Tester is from nearby Big Sandy and is now chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee. He should be a good resource for the tribe.

Contact Vibrant Futures as a potential partner.