



Welcome to Flathead Reservation

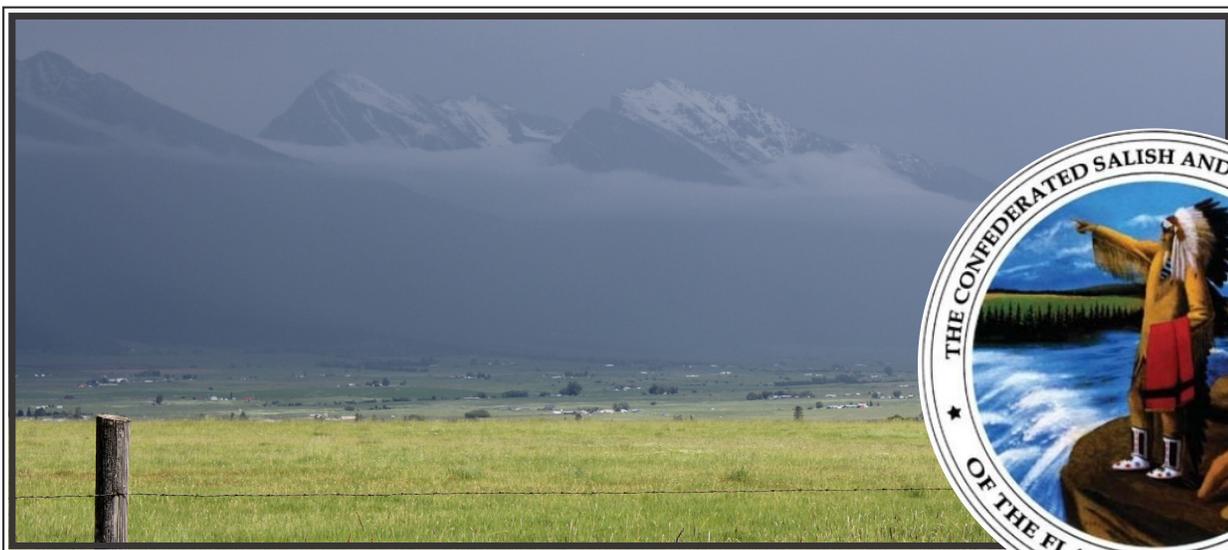
For more than 20 years the Flathead Reservation Extension Office (FREO), a part of Montana State University Extension, has served the people of the Confederated Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai tribes (CSKT). With over 1.317 million acres reaching into four counties, program staff work to bring research-based information to reservation communities. The office is grant-funded and offers a number of opportunities in positive youth development, food and nutrition, security and safety. Current community offerings are in Master Gardening, Master Food Preservation, ServSafe classes, Pesticide Applicator Training, Soil Sampling, Hay/Forage analysis, and Pest/Disease Identification and Management. Youth education offerings include in-school/after school 4-H activities, a youth mentoring program and a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) project focused on connecting youth to agriculture using technology. A youth mental health program has been introduced into local high schools. A strong SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education) program delivers healthy lifestyle lessons to more than 1,000 youth and adults each year. FREO recognizes the importance of promoting cultural awareness and diversity. Staff work to incorporate

cultural activities that honor and support CSKT traditions. Quality programing is successful due to the support of our local community members, partners and tribal support. Thank You!

Honoring the Past to Ensure the Future...

“The Flathead Indian Reservation is home to three tribes, the Bitterroot Salish, Upper Pend d’Oreille, and the Kootenai. The territories of these three tribes covered all of western Montana and extended into parts of Idaho, British Columbia and Wyoming. The Hellgate Treaty of 1855 established the Flathead Reservation, but over half a million acres passed out of Tribal ownership during land allotment that began in 1904.

The subsistence patterns of our Tribal people developed over generations of observation, experimentation and spiritual interaction with the natural world, creating a body of knowledge about the environment closely tied to seasons, locations and biology. This way of life was suffused with rich oral history and a spiritual tradition in which people respected the animals, plants and other elements of the natural environment. By learning from our Elders and teaching our children, those Tribal ways of life continue to this day.” www.cskt.org



Mission Mountains. Photo by Rene Kittle



A People of Vision

SNAP! Buy-Eat-Live Better

The Buy-Eat-Live Better Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) program addresses Montana's goals for increasing food security and healthier food choices. Participants learn to make the healthy choice the easy choice through focusing on nutrition, as well as physical activity.

On the Flathead Reservation, SNAP-ED Nutrition Educator Ginger Pitts reached 1,041 children and adults with 56 lessons/series. Students in first, third, and fifth grade received six lessons focusing on healthy eating, food safety and staying physically active. Eighty-six percent of the youth improved their diet quality. Many students reported reducing consumption of sugary beverages and increasing fruit and vegetable consumption. Eighty-eight percent of adults showed improvement in diet quality as well as an increase in physical activity.

- A senior woman who attended the series at the Flathead Reservation Extension Office (FREO) says the classes helped her cook in a new, healthier way. "It tastes so much better to use fresh vegetables - a lot better than just using foods from a box or can." She says learning how to cook with spices instead of salt has been good to lower her high blood pressure. She also says she is walking a few blocks every day with her walker and practicing the chair exercises taught in class.



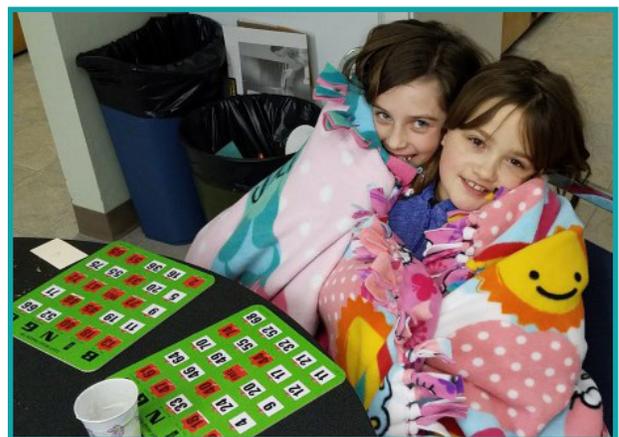
Photo by Kittle's Natural Produce.

- The mother of a first grade student saw Pitts in the produce section at the grocery and introduced herself. She said, "My daughter loves bringing home the newsletters and sharing with our family what you are teaching her class. She's been asking me to buy different fruits and vegetables (she held up her two bags of vegetables to show) so as a family we are trying new things! Thanks!"

Mentors, Mentees and Families: Growing Up Together

Native American students make up the largest minority group in Montana – about 11 percent. Native students have the lowest high school graduation rate. Two major factors in this are lacking social and emotional skills as they navigate the world of academia. Flathead Reservation Extension 4-H began a mentoring program in 2012. The National 4-H Center and the U.S. Department of Justice provide funding for 4-H National Mentoring Programs. The mission of the program is to increase the developmental assets of youth, ages 5-17 and their families. This is accomplished through hands-on activities that support social/emotional skill building, directly resulting in academic competencies.

During the past year, 30 mentees were matched and participated in the year-long mentoring program. Mentees are in grades K-7 and are recommended to the mentoring program by a school counselor. Mentors are local high school students or community adult volunteers. All mentors go through a stringent application process before being matched. Matches may be one-to-one or in groups of one-to-four depending on the needs of youth involved. Mentors attend monthly trainings that help to support and build their skills in appropriate relationship building. Mentors meet weekly with their mentees for fun, skill-building activities.



Bingo for blankets. Photo by Brenda Richey



A monthly 4-H club meeting is held in conjunction with a Family Night Out event. The program starts with mentees during after school hours, where they engage in 4-H activities. When families arrive, everyone enjoys a complementary supper. Families can participate in family strengthening activities during this time. Activity areas of focus include building trust, family support, kindness/community service, building positive family communication, working together/problem solving and strengthening family traditions.



Fun with STEM learning. Photo by Brenda Richey



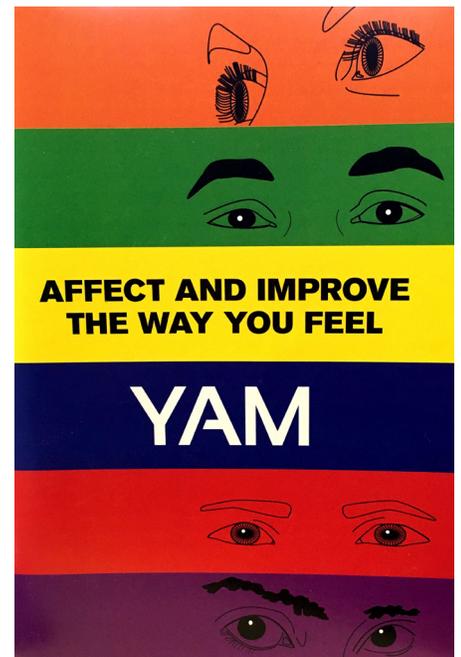
Youth Aware of Mental Health—one tool in the fight against teen suicide on the Flathead Reservation

Youth Aware of Mental Health is a project meant to improve the mental health resilience of youth on the Flathead Reservation. The project is a collaboration of MSU Extension and the MSU Center for Mental Health Research and Recovery (CMHRR). The project is designed for adolescents. In the largest and most rigorous study of its kind, YAM reduced suicide attempts by 54.6% and suicidal thoughts by 49.6% over one year in students who had not previously had suicidality.

YAM aims to provide youth with better resiliency through education and discussion about mental health and the development of problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence. The intervention utilizes a didactic booklet to increase knowledge, and posters, lectures and role plays to increase the awareness of students about their mental health and that of their peers and to enhance students' ability to cope with stress and crisis and to seek professional help.

An important component of YAM is a requirement that it is adapted culturally for each setting in which it is used. An adaptation of YAM to Montana was completed in the summer of 2016. In the last year, over 80 high school freshman on the Flathead Reservation participated in the YAM program. One student said, "...we got a chance to be educated about mental health and it was okay to feel certain emotions."

Surveys done this past year across the state of Montana showed that there was 79% improvement in students reporting they would seek help from school staff for depression and 49% improvement in students seeking help from school staff for assistance with feelings of suicide.



Flathead Reservation MSU Extension Goals

- Empower youth in a variety of programs to develop social, emotional, and academic competencies using culturally appropriate, and approved methods. Objectives include providing youth development programming in mentoring to strengthen social, emotional, and academic competencies, provide cultural and natural resource 4-H projects, Youth Aware of Mental Health training, and 4-H project clubs.
- Empower families toward a self-determined food-secure lifestyle with the ability to respond to personal needs for healthy and/or culturally-adapted Indigenous foods through hunting, fishing, gathering, growing, eating, nutrition and preserving. Objectives include providing youth and adults with hands-on educational experiences in gardening, cooking, and food preservation of foods grown, gathered and hunted, meat cutting, diabetes educational resources, and nutrition education.
- Enable community members through research-based education, to learn about food and nutrition, food safety in the food supply chain, growing and selling commodities while managing land use for productivity and financial security. Objectives include providing youth and adults with food safety knowledge when cooking for foods served in the community food supply chain, provide instruction on produce safety and developing food safety on the farm, pest management, *weed management*, and *educational resources to develop on-farm success strategies*.



contact us:



EXTENSION

Flathead Reservation

701-B 1st St East
Polson, MT 59860
(406) 275-2756

flatheadreservation@montana.edu
<http://flatheadres.msuextension.org>

Brenda Richey
4-H Youth Educator & Office
Manager

Ginger Pitts
SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator

Rene Kittle (retired in 2018)
Extension Agent