

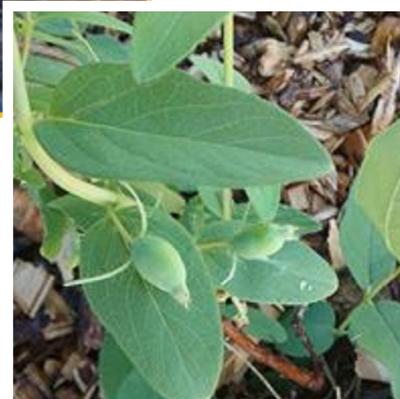


## Welcome to Fort Belknap Reservation

**F**ort Belknap Indian Reservation is homeland to the Gros Ventre (Aaniiih) and the Assiniboine (Nakoda) Tribes. Fort Belknap Indian Reservation is located 40 miles south of the Canadian border and 20 miles north of the Missouri River. Fort Belknap Indian Reservation is the fourth largest Indian reservation in Montana. The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation encompasses an area consisting of 675,147 acres, mostly rolling plains. The main industry is agriculture, with small business development. The Little Rocky Mountains, located at the southern end of the reservation, have two small communities. Hays, which has both a public high school and Saint Paul's Mission, and Lodge Pole, which has a public elementary school. Fort Belknap has a tribal membership of 7,000 enrolled members.



Mission Canyon, also known as Little People's Canyon.



Haskaps in the Lodge Pole Community Garden.

### **MSU Extension, Fort Belknap Reservation: Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program**

The MSU Extension program on the Fort Belknap Reservation is one of the long-standing 33 Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Programs (FRTEP) in the country. The role of FRTEP on the Fort Belknap Reservation has been historically integral to knowledge acquisition and skill development in the lives of tribal members at Fort Belknap for over 30 years. The Fort Belknap Reservation Extension staff have had a very busy year, providing education and outreach to many of the 7,000 members of the reservation. As agents worked to identify and prioritize the needs and interests of the reservation, community members of Hays, Lodge Pole, Dodson, and Agency showed increased interest in learning about and participating in a variety of topics.

Though it was a difficult year due to the extreme weather conditions affecting our reservation, there seemed to be a steady interest in continuing to address our goals and objectives as we respond to the emerging needs of families, producers, businesses and industry. We continue to see how MSU Extension's structure encourages true engagement and local involvement and expertise. In response to new technologies, staff have developed social media efforts that have reached a new demographic of participants; the Extension Facebook page has 522 followers. Additionally, direct contacts number over 600, and indirect contacts are estimated at 1,500. Partnerships and collaborators, both on- and off-reservation, number over 40 agencies, specialists and tribal programs.

## Accessing Healthy Lifestyles

MSU Extension classes in cooking, sewing, gardening, and other healthy lifestyle topics continue to be well-attended, with increased participant ownership of resources and direction.

A produce safety training was held to enable local growers to learn good agricultural practices, food safety and environmental management. Efforts toward building parameters around food laws, rules and codes have taken place. A partnership with NADC/Healthy Communities has provided direction and resources in local business planning for healthy lifestyles. The opening of the Red Paint Creek Store and Trading Post has been a major victory for healthy options in a rural community. A family that had limited access to vegetables has been able to try new options, and particularly are enjoying fresh carrots that are grown in the garden and sold at the store. On-going healthy lifestyle programming continues to be well-attended.



Youth grew celery from scraps.

## Food Sustainability Programming

Fort Belknap Reservation Extension food sustainability programming continues to be successful, interesting and viable.

This year, the Fort Belknap Reservation's efforts toward food sustainability has increased in scope and participation. Many more people have initiated home garden plots, the community gardens are thriving, and food preservation programming has expanded. An effort toward developing high-density fruit growing is underway, including apples, grapes, pears and plums. Community members have learned how to graft fruit trees. The Hays-Lodge Pole School has begun efforts to cultivate a large squash and corn plot. Horticultural knowledge is increasing, particularly regarding soil health, growing fruits,



Left, Valiant grapes at Hays Community Garden. Below, Lodge Pole members canning elk meat. Below left, Harvest Festival at Lodge Pole.



and Montana's growing season. Additionally, several community members have offered leadership in assisting others to learn food preservation. The target group in 2018 was interested younger people. One couple has stepped forward to learn safe canning techniques for meat preservation, and they were able to safely process 96 quarts of venison. They reported that "it's a great feeling to know we will have meat through the winter, no worries!"

## Rancher Roundup & Producer Outreach

Fort Belknap Extension conducted educational outreach workshops for local seasoned and potential cattle producers. Fort Belknap Extension co-sponsored the Rancher's Roundup with Fort Belknap Livestock Marketing Co-Op and NACDC Financial Services during the local Mid-Winter Fair. USDA, NACDC, MSU Extension specialists, NCAT, FSA, Blackfeet ARMP and local community garden leaders presented on relevant agricultural topics.

A 'Planning for On-Farm Success' workshop was attended by 26 residents, featuring Ross Racine from Inter-tribal Ag Council. Topics included farm planning, financial basics and identifying your market. Partners included USDA, NCAT,

FarmLink, ATTRA, Western SARE, Wild Sky Beef, BIA, and Food & Ag Development Centers.

Fort Belknap Extension collaborated with Fort Belknap Livestock Marketing Co-op to provide economic opportunities to local ranchers and encourage new youth producers. The Extension agent aided with the completion of three rural ag loans and two junior ag loans to bring new, young ranchers into operation on Fort Belknap.

A renewable energy workshop was presented by Ed May, of Renewable Energy Management, LLC. There were 30 participants who engaged in a lively discussion of options available to ranchers, producers and homeowners in choosing more renewable energy opportunities.

The workshops provided agricultural producers opportunities to solve their everyday challenges and obstacles. Producers left with knowledge and resources to improve their ranching and farming techniques.

### **Youth Development & 2018 Mid Winter Fair - Celebrating 50 Years of Resilience**

As most of Fort Belknap Extension involves families, the local youth have opportunities to participate in learning activities with us throughout the year. The community gardens continue to create opportunities for youth to be involved in agriculture. Youth participated in cooking classes during the summer months, and they engaged in community garden tasks through the summer youth employment program. We were fortunate to have had a summer MSU Extension intern, who offered archery classes in Hays and Lodge Pole.

The fourth-sixth grade students at the Lodge Pole School will continue to participate in school-based 4-H activities, allowing for more learning in the classroom.

The 2018 Mid Winter Fair celebrated its 50th anniversary, and was a huge success. The fair was opened with a family banquet in Dodson which highlighted a youth talent show. Youth from all over Fort Belknap Reservation shared their dancing, singing, storytelling, drumming, and art with the crowd. The next day, baked goods, pies, canned goods, and Chopped cooking contest participants showcased their culinary skills. The Fiddle and Jig Night brought musicians and dancers from all local areas. The fair finished off with a Stick Game Tournament and Traditional Pow Wow. There was a little bit of everything for everyone!

**Right, Ed May of Renewable Energy Management.**

**Below, a pruning workshop with Brent Sarchet, which was followed by a tree grafting class.**



**Right, Summer Youth Archery program in Hays.**

**Below, Roc Becinti teaching about biocontrol.**



**contact us:**



**EXTENSION**

**Fort Belknap Reservation**

Fort Belknap Agency  
656 Agency Main Street  
Harlem MT, 59526-9705  
(406) 353-2656  
tasia.hawley@montana.edu  
www.msuextension.org

**Elizabeth Werk**  
Extension Agent



**Hillary Maxwell**  
Family and Consumer Sciences  
Extension Agent