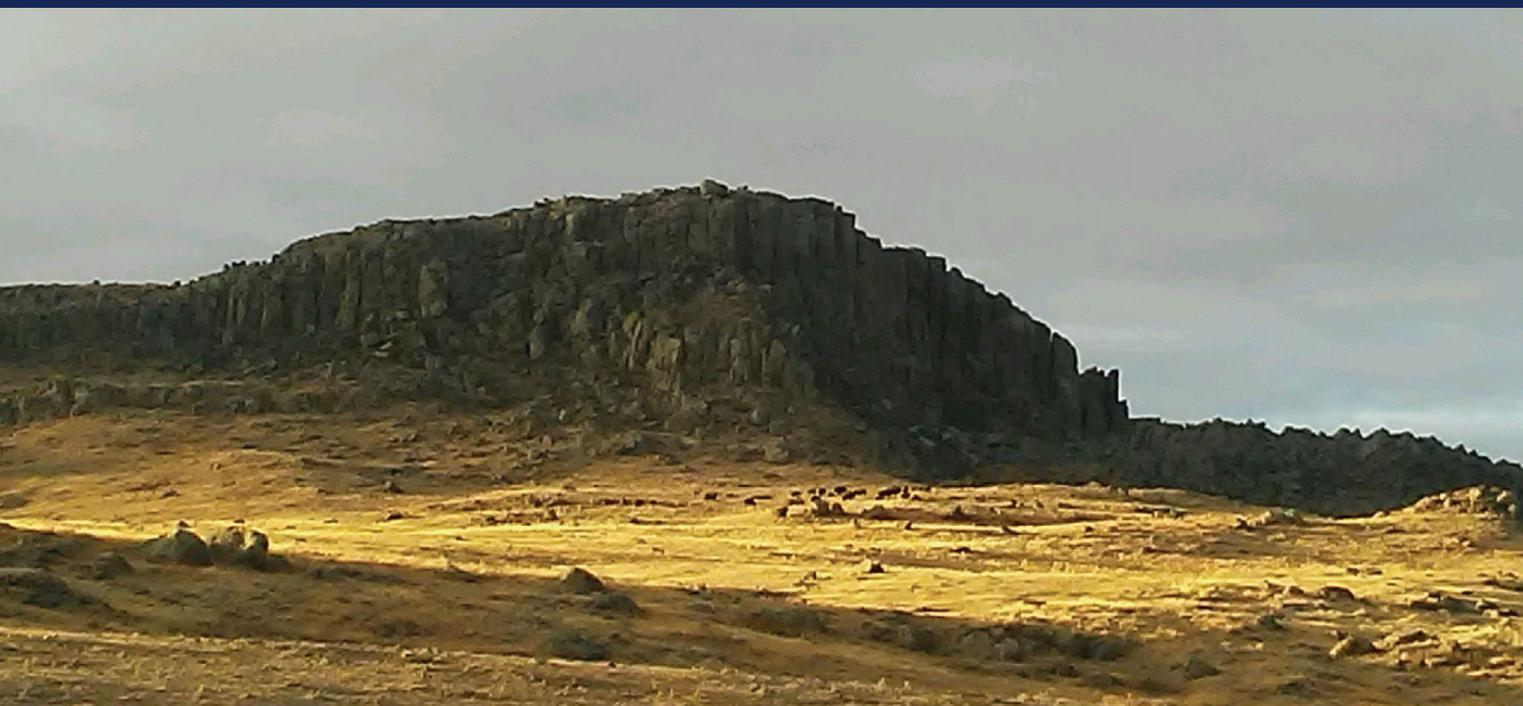


Fort Belknap Reservation

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Snake Butte in Fort Belknap Reservation

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 684 followers. Partnerships

and collaborators, both on- and off-reservation, number over 40 agencies, specialists and tribal programs.

Food Sustainability/Gardening Programming

The communities on the Fort Belknap Reservation continue to advance knowledge, skill and action toward food security. In 2019, several innovative efforts have contributed to an increase in participation by community members in this important effort. MSU Extension at Fort Belknap engaged in a collaboration with the MSU-Bozeman PATHS program, or “Pathways to Agriculture and Native foods, Tribal Health and Sovereignty.” This collaboration provided the Fort Belknap community members with seed potatoes of the Huckleberry Gold variety, a slow-glucose release variety that can positively impact health and nutrition. Community gardens also grew this variety to distribute.

The Hays Community Garden was able to expand its orchard holdings through grants from DNRC & Montana Urban and Community Forestry Association. The funds were used to purchase resilient varieties of apple and plum trees, bringing the total number of fruit trees to 31; additionally, the

orchard now supports eight grapevines. Community involvement increases each year as members gain knowledge and confidence in their approaches to gardening.

A new garden was introduced at the Fort Belknap RV Park on the northern end of the reservation, with 10 raised beds and 10 fruit trees. Two community members have stepped up to maintain the garden and will continue to be part of the planning in future expansion efforts. This garden is a partnership between MSU Extension and the Nakoda Aaniiih Economic Development Corporation.

The Lodgepole community garden has expanded its growing area to encompass a larger potato and squash field. Additionally, in a partnership with the Red Paint Creek Trading Post, garden produce is offered through the store to encourage locally-supported agriculture and nutrition.

Rancher's Roundup and Producer Outreach

Fort Belknap MSU Extension conducted ongoing educational outreach opportunities for local cattle producers and co-sponsored the Rancher's Roundup with Fort Belknap Livestock Marketing Co-Op and Native American Community Development Corporation 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. Ryan Lankford, Fort Belknap veteran farmer, presented his experiences from his Farm Credit Farmer Veteran Fly-In to Washington, DC, where he was selected to help policymakers understand the importance of programs that enable returning service members to forge meaningful careers in agriculture. Ryan also served as a panelist at the Senate Agriculture Committee, sharing his journey with policymakers.

Throughout the year, educational and on-farm events including Livestock Bull Test Day, Private Pesticide Applicator Training, and Farm & Ranch Management Workshops were held.

Fort Belknap MSU 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. 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.

Accessing Healthy Lifestyles

MSU Extension has been sustaining classes in cooking, sewing, gardening, and other healthy lifestyle themes for the past year. With increased interest and participation from

community members, the ownership of resources and direction continue to gather momentum.

With the opening of the Red Paint Creek Store and Trading Post last year, the variety of healthy options in this rural community has increased access for overall wellness. Classes in the kitchen, within the Red Paint Creek Store and Trading Post, are well-attended as community members learn how to cook and create healthy dishes with healthier alternatives from the produce that is grown within the community garden.

A partnership with NADC/Healthy Communities has provided two vertical grow towers which are still producing vegetables in both the Red Paint Creek Store and Trading Post and the public elementary school. Within the public schools, MSU Extension outreach has created new avenues for the students to have a mindful bite and open perspectives to try new vegetables and fruits. Also, through this outreach, there are new opportunities for the students to learn more about healthy lifestyles by growing their own fruits and vegetables.

Two new initiatives for accessing community wellness have been implemented through MSU Extension's Opioid Abuse Prevention and Kinship Caregivers Group. These initiatives are responsive to the Fort Belknap Community's increasing interest in resolving substance abuse and extended family challenges.

Through ongoing healthy lifestyle programming, there is a continuation of wellness initiatives that are being utilized and sustained by the Fort Belknap Community and its members.

4-H at Fort Belknap

Tribal Councilman Dominic Messerly and Event Announcer Kenneth "Tuffy" Helgeson opened the inaugural Fort Belknap 4-H Livestock Sale with an honor song in the heart of Lodge Pole for Nakoda Aaniiih's first Fort Belknap 4-H Fair on August 17, 2019.

"We held the auction on Friday evening, and the club members were in hog heaven! Their hogs sold for anywhere from \$3,000 to \$5,000! That's a lot of money for school clothes," Perez Cole exclaimed. The hogs averaged \$14.15/lb with an average weight of 277lbs. Tahilia Walker, Pre-Junior Showmanship Grand Champion, received the 2019 Symbol of Excellence award in the Carcass Division.

The Lucky Charms 4-H Club of Dodson was established in fall of 2016 to serve youth in Dodson and the Fort Belknap Reservation. The club has continued to grow. In spring of 2019, the club – youth and parents – requested to transfer the club from Phillips County MSU Extension to the Fort Belknap Reservation Extension Program. MSU Extension and Fort Belknap MSU Extension agreed to take on the administration of 4-H for the Fort Belknap Reservation.

This first fair is a start, and the future of 4-H at Fort Belknap is bright. We are excited to customize 4-H for Fort Belknap. Parent volunteers have stepped up to start two new clubs for the 2019-2020 4-H year: Wild Horse 4-H Club and



Top row: (left) Lucky Charms 4-H club; (right) Ryan Lankford of Lankford Farms; **Middle row:** (left) Students in the Hays Orchard; (center) Private Applicator Training held at Aaniiih Nakoda College; (right) Locally-grown pumpkins for sale at the Red Paint Creek Trading Post; **Bottom row:** (left) 4-H Fair welcome banner; (right) An after school sewing activity with elders bringing generations together

Little Rockies 4-H Club. The clubs have enrolled 15 members each with 2-4 volunteers, while volunteer and youth leadership training are in the planning stages. 4-H relies on youth and family involvement, adult volunteers and communities dedicated to helping our young people learn and grow. Together we can empower our youth with the skills to lead for a lifetime.

Fort Belknap Reservation Staff



Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and provider of educational outreach.



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