

Flathead Reservation



701-B 1st Street East, East Polson, MT 59860 | 406-471-3810 | flatheadreservation@montana.edu | MSU Flathead Reservation Facebook Page



Mission Mountains by Crystal LittleOwl.

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, health & nutrition, food safety and preservation, master gardening, soil sampling, and pest/disease identification and management. Youth education offerings include in-school/after school 4-H activities, a mentoring program and a youth/community health project focused on mental health. A strong SNAP-Ed program delivers healthy lifestyle lessons to more than 1,000 youth and adults each year. For local producers, FREO offers agriculture educational opportunities and connections to a variety of specialists. FREO recognizes the importance of promoting cultural awareness and diversity. Staff work to incorporate cultural activities that celebrate, honor and support CSKT traditions. Quality programming is successful due to collaboration between our local community members, partners and with tribal support.

Grow It Till U Make It - Responding to COVID 19

This food sovereignty campaign was started as a direct result of the Confederated Salish, Pend d'Oreille, Kootenai Tribal (CSKT) response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Funds from the Indian Lands Tenure Foundation (ILTF) that had been set aside to provide summer Ag Youth Camps were diverted in May 2020 to the GITUMI project, as all face-to-face youth camps were cancelled. COVID-19 demonstrated the need for our community to have gardening and food preservation skills. This program was designed to provide 15 participants with the education, tools, and supplies needed to grow their own food, learn to prepare nutritious meals using garden resources, and preserve it as a winter food resource. We had eight participants sign up with supplies remaining for seven more. We will offer this opportunity again in spring of 2021.

Participants agree to complete eight Master Gardener classes, one cooking class through MSU SNAP Education, and one two-day food preservation training. In recognition of their time and efforts, each participant received: one 8' x 4' x 16" raised bed with season extension capability, soil/compost, garden tools, soaker hose, hot water bath canner, canning

tools, and the ‘So Easy to Preserve’ Food Preservation book. Gardening and Food Preservation classes were facilitated in partnership with Patrick Mangan, Ravalli County Extension Agent and Nori Pearce, Flathead County Extension Agent.

Feedback on the project is that all participants will garden in 2021, soil testing has been done, and seed/plant choices are being planned. Participants are gathering local, fall food sources and preserving them. One participant is sharing her knowledge with her children and grandchildren. Another purchased supplies, built and installed four more raised beds in anticipation of the next growing season. After learning from the SNAP lesson how to make veggie stir fry, one participant said, “I’ve never made stir fry before...my son ate EVERY veggie because it tastes so good.” We anticipate additional positive responses to the GITUMI campaign and are looking forward to the 2021 growing/preserving season.

All A Buzz About Bees a 4-H Apiary Entrepreneurship

In partnership with the ‘Reason to Live’ Native Suicide Prevention Program and Lake County MSU Extension Agent Breton Homewood, the youth of the Flathead Reservation were given an opportunity to support food sovereignty and security. With Homewood’s expert guidance and a grant from the Indian Lands Tenure Foundation, Flathead Reservation MSU Extension was able to purchase all supplies needed to start a 4-H Apiary Entrepreneurship. The Elmo After School Program, Two Eagle River School (TERS), and Nkwusm Salish Language School were each selected to receive three beehives and weekly 4-H Apiary Club activities.

Prior to the March 2020 stay-at-home order, the Elmo after school youth helped to paint and decorate new hives for soon-to-arrive bees. In April, Elmo after school families watched from a safe, socially-distanced location as Homewood transferred over 9,000 bees into nine new hives. Three of the hives would remain in Elmo while others were taken to new homes. In June, with their science teacher filming live on Facebook, TERS students were able to watch “bee” action, as Homewood re-homed three hive boxes onto school property. The final three boxes intended for Nkwusm are also at TERS and waiting for fewer social distancing restrictions to allow more interaction with students involved. While COVID-19 certainly has changed our world, the youth of the Flathead Reservation are moving forward with innovation, learning ways to create value-added food items, support food sovereignty practices and combat food insecurity issues in their communities.

4-H Youth Lead the Way in Promoting Positive Mental Health

The Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) grant started September 1, 2019. The purpose of this grant is to

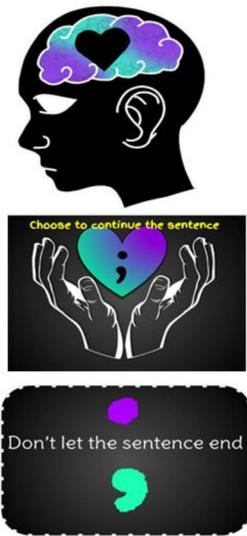
demonstrate if high school youth, after receiving education about mental health, can make a positive impact in opening the discussion of mental health within their communities. To achieve this purpose the work is two fold: first is the need to gain a better understanding of the community member’s general thoughts regarding mental health; second, youth need to receive mental health training and opportunities to work within their communities, sharing their knowledge through youth-led engagement.

To address community knowledge, the CYFAR program reached out to Tribal Council Leadership. CYFAR requested approval to create a community-wide survey. This presentation was during a Zoom broadcast that reached several hundred in tribal departments, businesses, and households. Both the survey and the program got unanimous Tribal Council support. The survey was created and after receiving Salish Kootenai College Internal Review Board approval, and it was administered reservation-wide. Over 300 adult participants shared their thoughts about mental health. In addition, the survey was sent to listservs of most large organizations and businesses on the Flathead Reservation. By late September, 419 responses to the Qualtrics Community Survey had been received from these organizations and businesses.

In early 2020, CYFAR jumped to a great start with implementation of the Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) curriculum. Freshman and sophomores of St. Ignatius and Ronan High Schools participated in this five-class series. This training was successful and led to the recruitment of students who have begun an in-school Youth Mental Health Leadership 4-H Club. Club participants, now trained in YAM, are working with the 4-H CYFAR Site Director to develop a civic campaign around social, emotional, and physical health and wellness. The campaign will feature activities and events, led by the youth, for their communities. Club students have demonstrated interests in teaching, marketing, and graphic design as well as a passion for mental health awareness. During their first club meeting, students assigned roles, selected an initial project and outlined long-term goals. Students continue to demonstrate ingenuity through the use of technology during the COVID-19 Pandemic by creating their own google classroom and working to include other club members who are at home due to restrictions.

SNAP-Education - Healthy Cooking for a Healthier You!

Ginger Pitts, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Educator taught us how to stay healthy during this past year, and taught the Flathead Reservation Community how to buy, eat, and live better. Pitts taught 263 classes with an average of six classes per week over the 2020 grant year. Health and nutrition classes were provided for over 850 children and adults with 47 class series and three ‘Creates’ classes.



Top: Mother & daughter learn about soil textures in GITUMI class, by Brenda Richey; **Bottom Row: (left)** Breton Homewood, Master Bee Keeper, transfers over 9,000 bees into new hives, by Brenda Richey; **(center)** 4-H CYFAR Teens, promote positive mental health by designing a club logo (brain) and promotional stickers; **(right)** Ginger Pitts demonstrates one of three Creates Classes, by Brenda Richey

Participant behavior changes from the ‘Eating Smart, Being Active’ series showed that:

- 100% of participants demonstrated improvement in one or more diet quality indicators (i.e., eating fruits, vegetables, red and orange vegetables, dark green vegetables, drinking less regular soda (not diet), drinking less fruit punch, fruit drinks, sweet tea, or sports drinks, and cooking dinner at home).
- 100% of participants showed improvement in one or more physical activity behaviors (i.e., exercising for at least 30 minutes, doing workouts to build and strengthen muscles, or making small changes to be more active).
- 50% of participants showed improvement in one or more food safety practices (i.e., washing hands before preparing food, washing all items and surfaces after cutting raw meat or seafood, not thawing frozen food at room temperature, or using a meat thermometer).
- 50% of participants showed improvement in one or more food security indicators (i.e., not eating less than you wanted so there was more food for your family or having enough money to get food for your family).

Behavior change from the ‘Youth Understanding MyPlate’ series showed that:

- 88% of children and youth improved diet quality via their abilities to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations or gained knowledge.
- 45% of children and youth improved their Physical Activity practices or gained knowledge.
- 54% of children and youth use safe food handling practices more often or gained knowledge.

In addition to direct and/or virtual adult/youth classes, Policy, Systems, & Environmental work was completed in 10 locations. These planning and policy projects lead to outcomes, that when reported at the national level, collectively help shine a light on individual accomplishments of SNAP-Ed and the positive impacts the program has in Montana.

Flathead Reservation Staff



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

Brenda Richey
Agriculture/4-H Agent

David Myers
4-H CYFAR PI & Site Director

Claudia Hewston
4-H/YFP Program Coordinator

Ginger Pitts
SNAP-ED