

Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program  
2008 HIGHLIGHTS

**FRTEP UNIT:** Michigan

**PROGRAM AREA:** Sustainable Agriculture and Horticulture

**PROGRAM TITLE:** Michigan Federally-Recognized Tribal Extension Program

**ISSUE(S) ADDRESSED:** Michigan Tribal communities face high rates of diabetes, heart disease and other lifestyle-related illnesses. These communities wish to improve their health and well being in a holistic way that also enhances their cultural identity.

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** The Michigan Federally-recognized Tribes Extension Project (FRTEP) seeks to support the health, well-being, financial independence and cultural preservation of four Michigan Indian tribes through the creation of a full-time Tribal Extension Educator position that will assist the tribes in advancing their horticultural programming. Michigan State University (MSU) Extension administers this FRTEP in collaboration with Bay Mills Community College (BMCC). The tribes partnering on the project are the Bay Mills Indian Community, the Hannahville Indian Community, the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. The Tribal Extension Educator, Dr. Larry Dyer, began service to the project on April 15, 2008. Since then he has met with groups in each of the four tribal communities to identify the interests, assets and needs in each community. Initial efforts in those communities have been directed toward improving sustainability of local food systems, fostering consumption of healthy local foods, demonstrating techniques for season extension, and increasing horticultural skills and capacities.

**PROGRAM IMPACT:** The Michigan FRTEP organized a workshop at Bay Mills Community College (BMCC) in which participants built a hoophouse. The hoophouse has subsequently been used as a teaching resource by a BMCC Environmental Science Class and a Sault Tribe youth summer program. We also established a 2000 sq. ft. community garden at the Bay Mills Cultural Center where we planted potatoes, tomatoes, corn, squash and strawberries. A Bay Mills Ojibwe Charter School culture and language class came to the garden to harvest the heirloom Bear Island Ojibwe flint corn.

The Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians (LTBB) held a tomato canning workshop in which participants canned almost 4 bushels of tomatoes. The following day, after the jars had properly cooled, each participant received two jars of canned tomatoes. Individuals gained the knowledge and skills to can

tomatoes. LTBB offered a similar workshop for canning applesauce and have a workshop scheduled to can venison.

One of the most important early outcomes of our new FRTEP is that Tribal Extension Educator Dyer has served as a catalyst accelerating the development of food systems and horticultural initiatives within the project service area. For example, Dr. Dyer helped connect a Sault Tribe elders group, who wanted tribal youth to be involved with the elders' garden, to the principal of the Sault Tribe's Bahweting Charter School. The principal took the initiative and arranged with the Elder's Garden coordinator to bring students to the Elders' Garden four times during the summer. Sault Tribe members in Manistique, Mich., after visiting the Bay Mills hoophouse and gardens, organized a meeting to discuss ideas for a hoophouse and community garden in their community.

Similarly, after a meeting in the Hannahville Indian Community to discuss gardening, Hannahville members and staff overseeing the community garden took the initiative to expand the garden to include another site near an elder housing complex. As with the outcomes in the Sault Tribe and LTBB, Dyer's role was to coordinate and reinvigorate existing tribal capacities. These outcomes were associated with existing tribal efforts, however, they might not have occurred if Dr. Dyer and the MI FRTEP had not initiated the conversations.

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