

Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program
2008 HIGHLIGHTS

FRTEP UNIT: Montana State University – Flathead Reservation Extension

PROGRAM AREA: Agriculture – Food Security

PROGRAM TITLE: Preserving Nutritious Foods

ISSUE(S) ADDRESSED: With the prevalence of diabetes in Native American people and obesity problems nationwide there is a need across the country and locally to increase availability of fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables for families and communities. On the Flathead Indian Reservation there are 650 reported cases of diabetes in the tribal community. Few Native American families garden and enjoy fresh, local produce due to a lack of knowledge, or a lack of exposure to horticulture practices. While many families dry meat and freeze foods in small amounts, few families have learned to preserve local foods using the hot water bath and pressure canning processes.



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Community gardens connect families at the community level where people come together to learn the basics of gardening, tasting different vegetable varieties, and receiving safe cooking and food preservation education. During the summer of 2008 community members gain new knowledge from the garden gate to the table. Targeted communities for a community garden in the spring of 2008 included Elmo, St. Ignatius, Pablo, and Arlee. Through a combined network of partners from Salish Kootenai College Extension (SKC), Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Elders Program, and Montana State University (MSU)– Flathead Reservation Extension, four community gardens were planted by SKC and MSU extension personnel and volunteers. Gardening was followed by family style dinners with fresh ingredients arranged by SKC and a series of classes in food safety and food preservation with hands-on canning classes from MSU Flathead Reservation Extension.*

PROGRAM IMPACT: MSU Flathead Reservation Extension held food preservation classes with a food safety component in Ronan, Arlee, and Pablo. Eleven SKC Upward bound participants canned strawberry jam. Twelve participants in Ronan and nine elders in Arlee canned tomatoes and pickles. Eighteen young parent participants in the Passages Program canned tomatoes and



salsa. Many participants in the salsa class took extra ingredients home to continue canning salsa at home and one young mother said she followed up making jam at home. As this program continued to grow and draw interest, in the fall seven participants attended a series of three classes in Ronan canning tomatoes and fresh Mackinaw fish from a local fishing derby. In the second class one participant said it was great to learn to can with a knowledgeable person (MSU) that could help her better understand the canning process with hands-on instruction. Hunting season is underway in western Montana and canning classes continue with wild game, including elk, deer, and bison. The Passages Program young parents have already signed up for their next class to pressure can bison.

* Funding for this program was provided in part by a USDA grant received by Michael Pierre, CSKT Elders Program and in part by a Kellogg Foundation grant received by Virgil Dupuis, Salish Kootenai College.

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