

IMPACT

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Farmer's market improves access to fresh produce and benefits community vitality

AT A GLANCE

Education and outreach through an annual food summit is raising awareness and action of citizens to strengthen the health and vibrancy of the Palouse-Clearwater Food System.

The Situation

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, UI Extension program serves the residents of the Coeur d'Alene Reservation that covers portions of Benewah and Kootenai Counties. Diet-related diseases including hypertension and diabetes, are the two leading patient diagnoses at the local Benewah Medical Center (BMC). Obesity among BMC patients is higher than the national average of 25% with Native patients faring worse than non-Natives. Additionally, Benewah County ranks 42 for Health Factors and Health Behaviors out of 42 counties according to County Health Rankings and Road Maps website www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Our Response

These factors led the local One Sky One Earth Food Coalition participants to look for various projects and ways that diets can be improved. Starting a farmer's market was selected as one of those projects.

The Coeur d'Alene Reservation Farmer's Market held in Plummer, ID, began in the summer of 2012. The initial purpose of the market was to increase access to local fresh fruits and vegetables for reservation residents.

The market is held weekly from June through September and has been coordinated by the UI Extension Educator who also serves as the chair for the food coalition. Benewah County Commissioners approved use of an open lot in Plummer, Idaho. The program



A Family shopping at the Coeur d'Alene Reservation Farmer's market. Photo by I. Mayes.

began with 10 registered vendors and has grown to over 20 with a maximum of 8 vendors participating each week in 2014. Vendors sell locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables and local eggs. Other goods include food-based, value-added products such as jams, salsa, spice mixes, and baked items. Non-food products include soaps, essential oils, jewelry and other crafts. There have been several youth vendors each week and the UI Extension AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer has provided a youth science craft each week during 2013 and 2014 seasons. Several vendors also sold seedlings at the beginning of the market season in 2014.

Program Outcomes

Cultural Capital. The initial goal of increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables was achieved. Four of the regular vendors sold an estimated 300 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables over the market season in 2014. Additionally, other benefits to the community

developed that can be framed in terms of improvements to various types of capitals.

Human Capital. The vendors at the Farmer's Market have exhibited increased skills in growing, selling, making and displaying their products. They have improved estimating how much product is needed and in taking orders ahead of time when practical. These skills have allowed vendors to increase their sales. Several youth have sold gleaned fruits at the market each year and several young adults have begun growing and selling vegetables and baked goods at the market.

Social Capital. The market has served as a hub for social activity for the target audience that has both a bridging function (connecting various segments of the community) as well as a bonding (strengthening existing relationships). These are important functions in rural areas where people can become isolated who live outside of town. These social cohesive functions are also important in Indian Country where Natives and non-Natives live in the same community and shared events can bring people together.

The vendors have bonded with one another forming a new community that motivates the regular vendors to come each week. "I want to come even if the weather is not that great." "I look forward to seeing the other people selling and the customers each week." Social cohesion occurs between vendors, between customers, as well as among customers and vendors. Social connections also serve to improve the health of community members according to studies reviewed by Richard McCarthy (www.marketumbrella.org).

Economic Capital. The market is functioning as a business incubator and business development opportunity. Sales for the first year, over seven market days, were \$2,213. (During the 2012 season there was a furniture vendor that helped to increase sales the first year. He has not participated in the subsequent markets). During the 2013 season sales were \$2,162 over 13 market days. Sales increased significantly and totaled \$5,322 during 2014 over 17 market days. Less days were canceled due to rainy weather in 2014.

According to "Estimating the Economic Impact of Public Markets," a multiplier of 1.13 can be used for producer income to estimate the economic effect of dollars spent at the market.

Economic Effect

- 2012 - \$2,501
- 2013 - \$2,443
- 2014 - \$6,014
- Total for three years - \$10,958

The economic effect is an important indicator of the health of a local economy. Money spent locally is beneficial because it potentially increases the wealth of the individuals and the community. Currently most of the dollars earned in the local economy are spent outside in Coeur d'Alene or Spokane, thereby weakening the local economy.

Shopping at the market has the potential to reduce travel time and distance for local residents if they can get more foods that they need, thereby saving travel costs.

Natural Capital. Growing more produce locally and with sustainable methods reduces stress on the environment from food being shipped in from farther distances.

The Future

In addition to the original goal of improving local access to fresh fruits and vegetables, many other community benefits have developed. In the long run, reducing severity and occurrence of diet-related disease will eventually reduce the use of health insurance that is provided by the Tribe to employees and Tribal members and that would result in a cost savings to the Tribe overall.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Benewah Medical/Wellness Center
- Benewah County
- One Sky One Earth Food Coalition

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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