

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Fort Hall Extension teaches tribal youth about agriculture and food production

AT A GLANCE

This program provides tribal youth an opportunity to learn about agriculture and develop an awareness of how food is produced and prepared for their health and enjoyment.

The Situation

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes have a history rich in agriculture; particularly cattle ranching, buffalo production, and farming of potatoes, grain and alfalfa. The Fort Hall Reservation consists of 544,000 acres. Of this acreage, 345,000 acres consist of rangeland used for cattle grazing. Over 121,000 acres are used for irrigated cropland and dryland farming. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Enterprise division also manages a farming operation that focuses on alfalfa and grain production. However, the majority of these tribal lands are leased to non-tribal members.

The Tribes are very interested in becoming more involved in agricultural production and utilizing their lands for their own agricultural endeavors. They would like to see more tribal members, particularly the youth, develop an interest and assume a more active role in the many diverse agricultural opportunities available on the Reservation. However, in today's technologically-based society, youth have lost the connection and interest in agriculture.

In the past, many families operated small agricultural operations which youth were involved in. However, as agricultural practices have changed to meet growing populations, small family farms and ranches have decreased. As a result, youth have not had opportunities to learn about agriculture or food production. Because of the Tribes' rich land base, interest and involvement in production agriculture, tribal leaders



Nola Cates, Tribal 4-H Program Director, demonstrates and discusses recently hatched chickens to tribal youth. Photo by Danielle Gunn.

want youth to become more interested, educated and involved in agriculture.

Our Response

Nola Cates, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal 4-H program director and Danielle Gunn, the Fort Hall Agricultural Extension Educator, developed a "Tribal Youth in Ag Program" to meet tribal leader requests and educate youth about agriculture and food production. We collaborated with the Fort Hall Elementary and After School programs. This enabled us to offer an agricultural education program every year during the school months to a captive audience. Our program has been very unique and effective!

We select a specific agricultural commodity every month. A science-based agricultural lesson is then developed and taught followed by a hands-on learning activity and skill. We then have the youth prepare a healthy snack using the selected agricultural

commodity for that particular month. A follow-up visit and evaluation is conducted the same month to review the basic principles taught and record the knowledge learned in record books.

The program has been very successful and well-accepted by youth and educators at Fort Hall Elementary and After School programs. To complement this program, we also assist youth with Farm Service Agency Youth Loans so interested youth can purchase their own livestock or begin other agricultural-based enterprises. We also take one to two youth every year to attend the Intertribal Agriculture Council Conference. These programs and activities are getting youth more involved and excited about agriculture and food production!

Program Outcomes

We recently completed the second year of a very successful Tribal Youth in Ag program. Currently, we have taught classes about ten different agricultural commodities. These classes have included lessons in beef and dairy cattle, poultry, potatoes, wheat, corn, strawberries, apples, peanuts, Christmas tree production and much more. We have reached over a hundred students per year with our programming and have provided youth with valuable opportunities to learn about agriculture and food production. Our classes are science-based, innovative, hands-on and, most importantly, fun and engaging.

Our Tribal Youth in Ag program utilizes teaching methods that youth can apply directly to their lives. After youth participate in our program, they can knowledgeably discuss agricultural commodities, how they are produced, harvested and transported for the youth to enjoy in their everyday lives. The youth also learn skills regarding production agriculture and preparing wholesome foods from agricultural commodities. These skills include the identification of specific livestock, dairy and poultry breeds, the identification of crops and how to grow and care for them, gardening skills, food preparation skills and much more! Above all else, tribal youth have developed their own personal connection and knowledge of agriculture and food production through this exciting program.

The Future

UI Extension Fort Hall will continue developing agricultural programming and educating tribal youth about agriculture. We will provide them with unique learning opportunities and skills to enrich their connection to their food and fiber. Collaborative efforts with Fort Hall Elementary and the After School program will continue to provide youth with great educational opportunities involving agriculture and food production. We will also continue providing additional programming as youth become more interested and engaged in

agriculture and the processes that provide products necessary to healthy, happy, successful lives. As the interest in agriculture and food production continues to grow, we will continue work on meeting youth needs through new, innovative programs and program expansion. The future looks very bright for tribal youth involved in agriculture!

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Fort Hall Elementary School

Fort Hall Elementary After School Program

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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