

Toiyabe Indian Health Project – Community Wellness Program

Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health Projects in the Eastern Sierra of California

Background: Toiyabe Indian Health Project is located in Bishop California and serves 7 federally recognized, and 2 non-recognized Paiute Shoshone Tribes, as well as providing rural health services to non-Native patients through a variety of medical, dental, behavioral health and prevention services. Our service area spans 350 miles and works with city and county governments in Inyo and Mono County.

Our REACH funding is promoting increased access to healthy and affordable foods through projects that build community and school gardens, community kitchens, and farmers markets, promote healthy food policy, water drinking infrastructure and food system coalition building. We currently have projects in all 9 of our communities and also boast community-clinic linkage projects internally in our clinic.

Toiyabe Indian Health Project Camp Antelope Clinic – Walker-Coleville, CA

This project started in the spring of 2016 and developed raised garden beds at our remote clinic site so that providers and medical staff can give fresh produce to patients. Walker-Coleville has one small country store that does not provide much fresh produce. Staff at this clinic approached the Community Wellness program for funding to establish these gardens to help support healthy eating to their clients

Two raised beds and a greenhouse were installed at the clinic with volunteer labor from clinic staff and medical providers



Mono County Antelope Valley Community Garden – Walker-Coleville, CA

The Antelope Valley Community Garden approached the Community Wellness Program seeking funding and partnership to help improve the water and community engagement at their community garden. In the spring of 2015 CWP project coordinators visited the community garden site and helped install drip irrigation systems with the community garden volunteers. This effort not only provided better watering and larger yields but also built a partnership between the garden volunteers and the Camp Antelope Clinic. All volunteers at this garden donate 20% of their yield to area elders programs and food banks. Because of this partnership, patients at the Toiyabe Camp Antelope clinic started receiving free produce from these donations. This partnership continues and is helping to provide fresh food to a community that does not have it otherwise.



Antelope Valley Community Garden Volunteers after completing a large scale drip irrigation system installation.

Bridgeport Indian Colony Traditional and Ecological Knowledge Program – Bridgeport, CA

The Bridgeport Indian Colony TEK uses REACH funding to provide staff to coordinate community education and outreach around healthy eating, nutrition and garden development, and establishing a tribally run farmers market. The TEK program holds community workshops on soil health, garden design and greenhouse functionality, and collaborates with the area Master Gardener's program to bring Natives and non-Natives together to grow in a large scale community garden. The TEK operations also focus on traditional foods and have an adjoining native food garden to their domestic vegetable garden. In spring 2015 they developed an orchard with over 37 trees built in a permaculture design to capture rain water and keep the trees well-watered and expanded that orchard this year to include an additional 20 trees. Currently they have and harvest from 5 bee hives, providing local honey for community members and for income through local market sales. They also have a state of the art humid controlled greenhouse that allows them to grow food throughout the entire year for the 40 permanent homes on the reservation despite winter temperatures that reach -15 Fahrenheit.



Left: Tomatoes grow in the climate controlled greenhouse in January.

Right: Swale and berm techniques help to capture rain and snowfall to keep the orchard well-watered.



Bishop Paiute Tribe Food Sovereignty Program – Bishop, CA

The Bishop Paiute Tribe FSP is a conglomerate of 2 garden sites. The first is a .5 acre garden that grows traditional foods such as Taboose, as well as domestic vegetables to sell at the tribal farmers market they run. The second site was added in the spring of 2016 and is located at the Bishop Paiute Tribes elder building and has over 50 turkeys and chickens, 2 bee hives, a greenhouse with an aquaponics system growing tilapia and a .5 acre vegetable garden. This program now staffs 2 full time farm managers as a result of REACH funding and is able to grow large quantities of fruits and vegetables to sell at the market. This market, now in its second season provides economic opportunities for many people in the Tribal community and provides a safe and family friendly environment. The community market accepts CalFresh SNAP benefits and is now a vendor accepting our Toiyabe Green Rx vouchers.



Left: The community garden at the elders, with the aquaponics greenhouse in the background

Right: Fresh, organically grown produce to sell at the Bishop Paiute Community Market.



Bishop Indian Head Start – Bishop, CA

BIHS is a model program partner, combining REACH funding to create a healthy food environment through a large school garden and orchard, developing healthy eating habits through a complete over-hall of their kitchen menu to serve only fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and water and through the development and implementation of a healthy food policy. In the spring of 2015, BIHS used REACH funding to expand their school garden from three raised beds to a half acre plot and planted over 30 fruit and nut trees and berry vines. This spring they expanded their healthy food efforts by adopting a healthy food policy and working with surrounding gardens to identify vegetable crops that could be grown for consumption of students and staff. They continue to offer only fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and water to their students and have overwhelming attendance from family cooking classes and participating in their food preservation courses.



Left: Fresh food to celebrate the 2016 preschool graduation
Right: Part of the expanded school garden where student grow the food they eat!



Big Pine Paiute Tribe Sustainable Food Systems Project – Big Pine, CA

The Big Pine Paiute Tribe SFSP has been growing for the last 4 years. This project receives REACH funding to support personnel that grow food year round for the surrounding community and their Nawanaki-ti Market. Having two 90 foot hoop houses has helped this small project grow an abundance of fresh vegetables and their surrounding food forest, berm and swale orchards with edible ground plants, provides fresh fruit and access to harvest traditional foods such as elderberries and nahavita. This forest is also able to sustainable capture water from irrigation lines and helps to demonstrate traditional water capturing and moving techniques to the community. Their Nawanaki-ti market is in its fourth season operates weekly and not only provides fresh produce and arts and crafts but this summer sells bulk whole grains, dried beans and fruit. The market is another participating vendor to our Toiyabe Green Rx program.



Left: Volunteers help plant in one of the 90ft hoop houses
Right: Fresh produce and canned goods are for sale weekly at the farmers market

Big Pine Paiute Development Corporation Community Kitchen – Big Pine, CA

Using volunteer labor and REACH funds BPPDC has successfully renovated a community kitchen in their Wellness Center for community nutrition education and as a facility to prepare fresh foods for sale and community gatherings. The kitchen space, part of the wellness center, was for years used as a storage space. Through visioning and planning support from REACH staff the kitchen was renovated to have updated, commercial grade equipment installed and the kitchen now staffs a part-time coordinator to help provide nutrition instruction and coordinate the facilities use for groups like the Master Food Preservers and other community members interested in preserving or preparing foods to sell or serve at community gatherings. The marriage of this kitchen with the wellness center ensures that the food prepared is healthy and promotes an environment of lifestyle change through improved dietary habits.



Left: New stove and prep area create a clean environment for food prep

Right: New commercial grade sink ensures safe food handling!

Fort Independence Paiute Tribe Community Garden – Fort Independence, CA

With REACH funding the Fort Independence Tribe has been able to hire on staff to work in their 3 acre community garden, providing fresh fruits and vegetables to all of the community members on this otherwise food desert of a reservation. The Ft. reservation is located approximately 40 miles from a large grocery store and has only a gas station to serve the communities immediate food needs. With a full time staff person working in the garden, they now provide produce to not only the community members but also sell it to travelers who stop at the gas station. The garden boasts a large greenhouse that is able to grow vegetable starts for sale in the spring and has over 60 orchard trees and a vineyard to provide organic fruit to the community.

Left: Fresh peaches are grown for harvest by the community and for sale to visiting tourists.

Right: Part of the 3 acre garden where tomatoes, peppers, onions, beans and a whole host of other vegetables are grown!



Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe Community Garden – Lone Pine, CA

The LPPST, with the help of REACH funding has been able to expand the growing and food preservation capabilities of their community garden. In 2015 they were able to install irrigation lines and expand their garden space with the help of REACH funds and community volunteers. They were also able to build a solar dehydrator and preserve fresh foods, while educating their community, for the winter season. They were also successful in establishing a youth education program and have many youth workers helping to keep the garden and surrounding orchard growing healthy food for the community.



Left: Youth workers help expand and care for the community orchard

Right: A handmade solar dehydrator helps preserve foods for the winter season!



Timbisha Shoshone Tribe – Death Valley, CA

In one of the hottest places on earth the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe has used REACH funding to develop a drought tolerant permaculture orchard with the help of the Indigenous Farming Project. This project installed 20 orchard trees, both fruit and nut, into the village of 25, which otherwise has no access to fresh fruit and vegetables. This orchard, designed to capture large quantities of flood water and store it, is phase one of two that will bring fresh produce to this remote village. The second phase, anticipated to start in fall of 2016, will include raised garden beds, designed and planted with heat and drought resistant capabilities. The village has received this project with open arms, dividing up the labor and maintenance to keep their trees growing the food coming to them!



Left: the swale and berm technique helps to capture flood waters and keep the trees from both washing away and having a large reservoir of water to pull from



Right: Timbisha Shoshone villagers help build the swales and plant the trees for their community orchard.

University of California Davis Agriculture and Natural Resource Extension Office Master Food Preserver and Master Gardener Program – Eastern Sierra, CA

With support from REACH funding the UCANR has partnered to bring culturally appropriate food preservation and garden classes to each of the nine area tribes that Toiyabe serves. This program has been well received and averages 20 people per class to learn about safe food preservation techniques like low sugar canning, dehydrating and freezing and provides varied education at each class to help build on knowledge for returning students. The Master Gardener program, slated to start in spring 2017, will provide hands on education for Tribal members at their community garden sites and will focus on such topics as pruning, composting, soil health and organic pest management. All of these classes are encouraging a larger body of knowledge in our local communities in the hopes that more local food is grown and preserved to keep our members healthy!

Pacific Region Youth Agriculture and Leadership Summit

Through a partnership with the University of Arkansas, University of Nevada Reno, the Indigenous Food & Agriculture Initiative and the Intertribal Agriculture Council, REACH funding is supporting the development and hosting a regional Native American youth summit to train the next generation of ag leaders and policy makers. This summit, which will be held October 14-16th in Reno, NV, will bring together youth from throughout the west who are interested in agriculture and food system management. This program is being modeled on a 4 year program from the University of Arkansas School of Law Food and Agriculture Initiative.

Toiyabe Indian Health Project Employee Wellness Healthy Food Policy

As part of our continued efforts to promote the easy access to healthy food, we see it as critical to creating healthy food environments wherever we can. This includes our own institution and REACH staff has been instrumental in developing, educating and promoting the adoption of a healthy food policy for Toiyabe Indian Health Project. Currently this policy is in its final stage of approval from our Board of Directors. When adopted, this policy will be a guiding document for any Toiyabe sanctioned meetings and events and will create a healthy environment for our patients.

Toiyabe Indian Health Project Green Rx Program

New to 2016 Toiyabe has unveiled a Green Rx Program. This program, while not funded directly from REACH funding, has been a collaborative effort with REACH program staff and Toiyabe Indian Health Project Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Certified Diabetes Educator. The Green Rx program provides \$25.00 vouchers to patients eligible to see and work with the RD/CDE and provides cross collaboration by being accepted at both of our Tribal farmers markets and at an area food cooperative. Even though this program has just launched, is already proving successful with patients calling to set up appointments with the RDN/CDE because they have heard about the program. We hope that this community clinic link continues to grow and help our Native American patients have increased access to healthy foods..

Eastern Sierra Tribal Food Coalition

REACH program staff has been instrumental in starting and growing the Eastern Sierra Tribal Food Coalition. The ESTFC was started in February of 2015 and is a collective of representatives from area tribes, community food activists and educators, as well as tribal leaders and economic development staff. This group, which meets monthly, has developed an MOU, which has been signed by 6 tribes to date and has participated in 3 strategic planning workshops to develop a regional food system plan. Members from this coalition have also traveled to conferences such as the First Nations Food Sovereignty Summit in Oneida, WI, as well as learning workshops on seed saving, permaculture design courses and economic development education.