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 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 mar-
ket.

**Social Capital.** The market has served as a hub for social ac-
tivity for the target audience that has both a bridging func-
tion (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 func-
tions 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 ven-
dors, 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

**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 in-
come 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 indi-
cator of the health of a local economy.
Money spent locally is beneficial because it
potentially increases the wealth of the
individuals and the community. Current-
ly 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 lo-
cal residents if they can get more foods
that they need, thereby saving travel
costs.

**Natural Capital.** Growing more produce
locally and with sustainable methods re-
duces stress on the environment from
food being shipped in from farther dis-
tances.

**The Future**

In addition to the original goal of improv-
ing local access to fresh fruits and vege-
tables, 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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