Reclaiming sovereignty in the Growing Resilience action-research collaboration

Porter, Bowers, Weed, Harris, Harris, Wechsler, Pat White, Kathryn Lone Fight, Melvin Arthur, & Rachael Budowle

Native American Nutrition Conference, September 2019
Today’s Story

Introducing the Growing Resilience project

Recounting stories and their morals for reclaiming sovereignty

Learning from gifts offered by CAB and others

Discussion panel that follows
Introducing *Growing Resilience: an RCT on the health impact of gardens with Wind River Indian Reservation*

Christine M. Porter  Alyssa M. Wechsler (non-Native)
Research Scientist and Project Manager
University of Wyoming (UW)
Project origins

Credit: Feeding Laramie Valley

Credit: Jim Sutter, Blue Mountain Associates
What are the impacts of home gardens on family health in Wind River?
Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Aim 1: Gardening intervention
- Blue Mountain Associates: Garden intervention design
  - Materials and installation
  - Training and mentorship

Aim 2: Delayed intervention RCT on health impacts of home gardens
- University of Wyoming: Data collection & analysis
  - Survey, blood draw, biometrics
  - Talking circles, Sovereign Storytelling

Tribal Health partners: Family recruitment and retention
- WY Health Fairs: Blood draws, Share individual health reports
Project timeline

Pilot 2013
Recruit 1 Fall 2015
Data 1 Feb 2016
CAB 1 Apr 2016
(Finish Fall 2020)

Project Co-Design
Where we are now

96 families

196 adults

157 kids

63 home gardens (so far!)
The Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Rhonda Bowers (Northern Arapaho)
Growing Resilience Community Advisory Board Chair
UW Wind River Reservation Extension Administrator, Senior
Wind River Tribal Farmers Market Manager
About Us

• Current Members: Rhonda Bowers (Chair), Ina Weed, Pat Harris, Clarisse Harris, Pat White, Kathryn Lone Fight

• Broad experience: Agriculture Extension, farmers markets, installing participant gardens, being a project participant, broad range of ages, all of us garden!
Challenges

• CAB brought on late
• Picking the right members

• University’s vision for the CAB vs...
...

Our vision for ourselves.

CAB Project Oversight

2016 2021

Food sovereignty through gardens

2016 → Future generations
Successes

• All-native board

• Restructured CAB to ensure community outreach and sustainability beyond project
  • Set our own leadership structure
  • More frequent meetings
  • Attend and present at conferences
  • Gained own project budget – built demonstration community garden, set up own farmers market (next year)
  • Fundraising for future
An Unexpected Garden Journey

Ina Weed  (Eastern Shoshone)
Growing Resilience Community Advisory Board Member since 2018
HR, Staff Development Coordinator, Eden Educator at Morning Star Care Center
Was pilot project partner, with Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health, in 2013
Family gardening participant in Growing Resilience, 2016-17
Pilot Project

My role: Tribal Health Diabetes Outreach

- Community involvement
- Family health promotion
- Impacted the whole family environment/home
- Some challenges of processing data collection
My role: Gardener

• Carry on gardening tradition from previous generations
• Healthy food options/recipes
• Physical activity levels heightened as a family
• Storytelling
Community Advisory Board

My role: CAB Member

• What I brought to the CAB
• Involvement with community
• Share experience
• Presently work with Elders
Learning from gifts offered by the CAB and other Indigenous mentors, colleagues, and partners

Christine M. Porter (non-Native)
Principal Investigator, Associate Professor
Wyoming Excellence Chair in Community & Public Health
University of Wyoming (UW)
Considering academia as part of the fence

Image inspired by critique in an Equity in Education Coalition blog, November 2018
Academic supremacy, e.g. $3.3m GR budget

- UW salary/benefits (29%)
- UW supplies and misc (6%)
- UW indirect/overhead (6%)
- WY Health Fairs (5%)
- Garden intervention delivery (18%)
- Recruitment and retention (4%)
- Resources to participants (6%)
- CAB support (8%)
- GR national summit 2020 (2%)

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Total: $711,000
Dollars for dismantling fences

Nail-prying financial strategies we have learned to use include:

- Give subawards to tribal and community partners.
- Negotiate with university to pay subawards in advance (not arrears).
- Increase direct subaward support to tribal and community partners, e.g., to cover rent.
- Reduce or forgo faculty summer pay.
- Include professional development and dissemination support, especially travel budgets. Need to plan for cash advances.
- Beyond the work-around: e.g., increasing indirect rates, awarding tribal partners, fighting for more equitable pay.
Reclaiming sovereignty through co-design

1. Co-designed study in pilot

2. Family gardening

Credit: Dodge Family
Reclaiming sovereignty through co-design

3. CAB leadership

CAB Project Oversight

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4. Sovereign Storytelling method
But, we need new paradigms

Harmony and Balance in Life: Applying the Social-Ecological Model in AI/AN Communities

https://www.ihs.gov/healthyweight/hwmodel/
Gifts offered, to all of us
On the joint discussion panel that follows

**Pat Harris** (Northern Arapaho)
Growing Resilience Community Advisory Board Member since founding
Gardening mentor and tiller supporting Blue Mountain Associates

**Clarisse Harris** (Northern Paiute)
Growing Resilience Community Advisory Board Member

& **Christine Porter Alyssa Wechsler** (non-Native),
research scientist and project manager
Thank you!

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The **Growing Resilience** “real thing” is supported by NHLBI with NIGMS at the National Institutes of Health with grant no. R01 HL126666-01. (www.growingresilience.org). **Soon we will have online sign up for those interested to stay posted about the GR 2020 conference!**