Background
Blue Mountain Associates (BMA) is a human services organization working with Wind River Reservation (WRR) families to design, locate, build and support home gardens in the Growing Resilience (GR) project. Initiated by a pilot, this study provides the platform for the research and the gardening activities of tribal members. The WRR is located in central Wyoming where residents are likely to suffer diabetes at twice the rate of all other populations in the state.

Purpose of Study
This project aims to assess the health impacts of home food gardens by recruiting 100 Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho families of the Wind River Indian Reservation in a delayed-intervention randomized controlled trial from 2016-2020.

GR Support & Collaborations
Families randomly assigned to intervention receive a full gardening support package from BMA after attending an initial event to collect baseline health data. The support package includes:
• Consultation on size/what kind of garden (e.g. in-ground, raised bed, container)
• Assistance in garden installation (minimum of 80 square feet)
• Purchase of materials (e.g. tools, starts, and seeds)
• Ongoing mentorship
• Gardening workshops
In the first year of the project, 8 of the 10 families requested raised-bed gardens and 2 requested in-ground gardens. The average cost of the year-one gardening support package was $507 per family (plus BMA staff time). Gardening participants planted Brussel sprouts, green beans, jalapeño’s, verde pepper, sweet corn, cucumber, carrots, strawberries, pumpkin, zucchini, yellow squash, walls-walls, broccoli, Yukon potato’s, thyme, oregano, basil, and parsley with the help of master gardeners.

Discussion
The initial observations of the gardening intervention convey that gardeners have been successful because of high participation and outputs during this years harvest. We are tracking ways to make improvements especially in respect to building the health of the soil during the winter months. To do this BMA is looking into composting and planting cover crops as a means of preparing for next years growing season. In addition to the potential impacts on health of individuals, the gardening intervention is helping build community capacity to move forward in solidarity with other sovereign nations in the pursuit of a healthy and culturally appropriate food system.

Future Research
The GR project is currently designing the qualitative section of the research study that will use focus groups as a method for measuring the impact of the gardening experience among the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone people in the Wind River Indian Reservation.

The McAdams family enjoying their garden. (Photo by Jodi McAdams)

Funding:
The Growing Resilience pilot was supported by grants from NCRR (5P20RR016474-12) and NIGMS (8 P20 GM103432-12) of the National Institutes of Health.

Growing Resilience is supported by NHLBI with NIGMS at the National Institutes of Health.
(www.growingresilience.org)