

GROWING RESILIENCE



The Inside Scoop

A quarterly newsletter by and for project stakeholders about “Growing Resilience in Wind River Indian Reservation: an RCT on gardens for health”

Introduction

By Melvin L. Arthur, UW

Congratulations to all the participants and staff as we have officially completed the 1st growing season for the Growing Resilience (GR) project! Presented here is an overview of our first year successes that include 100% participation from all the families, phenomenal gardens, gaining valuable input from the Community Advisory Board (CAB), and positive media coverage. University of Wyoming (UW) partners held the first data collections with 18 families in January of 2016, including the controls for the study, and all 18 families returned for the second data collection in August. Our participation rate has been outstanding and it indicates that participants are invested in building gardens and food sovereignty in the Wind River Reservation (WRR) and learning about the health impacts of those gardens. The goal of the GR project is to test the impacts of gardening on health, and we are fulfilling the requirements to complete the research. More importantly, however, we are building gardens (pictured below) and a healthy movement that can potentially change the food system of WRR. The participation of tribal members who are NOT gardening (controls) is very important because their inactivity will give us a baseline for comparing the data from the participants in the intervention (gardening) group. Much of our success can be attributed to the guidance of the CAB who made decisions on behalf of the



community like gauging the cultural appropriateness of the GR project and the promotional materials distributed in the community. The GR project has increased the awareness of gardening for health in Indian Country on the local and national level, as we have been featured in many media outlets and participated in the conferences that are currently defining this type work. In terms of positive association and the importance of gardening in the WRR, the newly appointed president of UW, Dr. Nichols highlighted GR during her first ‘state of the university’ speech, which is a testament to the viability of gardening for tribal members.

Updates from Project Partners

GR partners include Blue Mountain Associates (BMA), Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health (ESTH), the Wind River Development Fund (WRDF), the University of Wyoming (UW), and the participating families themselves! Collaborations between people and partnerships continue to be extremely valuable for the intervention as a whole and the participants that finished the first season.

First Season Families

Gardeners planted seeds on over 840 square feet in raised beds and on two in-ground gardens putting the total land use to over 1,000 square feet. Participants have expressed strong desires to continue and expand their current gardens. Additionally, 100% of families that attended the first health data collection session in February 2016 had family members return for a follow-up session in August! This is a testament to the commitment and hard work of all project partners, especially the participants!



Blue Mountain Associates

BMA designed and built the 21 - 4'x8' raised beds for gardeners at the before the growing season and they worked with participants when placing the gardens at the family home. Etheleen Potter and Pat White accomplished the labor-intensive carpentry work and the gardeners were very happy with the outcome of the growing season. To finish up, BMA assisted gardening participants in putting the gardens to bed for the season.

Having gardening assistants has proven to be extremely helpful in designing and building gardens for participants at a cost of just over \$500. We also hope to integrate four AmeriCorps workers for the next growing season.

BMA Contact: Jim Sutter, 307-335-8455, jwwsutter@gmail.com

University of Wyoming

Project partners completed a second successful data collection session with participants in August. Wyoming Health Fairs staff conducted blood draws, and University of Wyoming partners collected survey and qualitative data and assisted with biometric data collection. With assistance from the Wyoming Survey Analysis Center and assistant professor Felix Naschold, we have begun initial analysis of health data.

Assessing the health impacts of home gardening will be accomplished on the quantitative and qualitative levels. UW staff will continue qualitative assessments of the impacts of home gardens. We plan to hold a series of focus groups regarding gardeners' perspectives to evaluate the impacts on the family and its members. After all the data has been collected, it will be analyzed to show how the intervention has impacted individuals, families, and the community, and we will explore what the community perceives the next step to be.

UW Contact: Alyssa Wechsler, 307-399-3247, info@growingresilience.org

Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health & Wind River Development Fund

ESTH and WRDF have been keeping records of interested families (that list is up to over 40 families), and at the August open house they began screening interested families for eligibility to join GR in 2017. If you or someone you know is interested in joining Growing Resilience, contact Naomi, David, or Etheleen!

Contacts:

Naomi Harris (ESTH): 307-332-6805,
naomi@esthealth.org

David Meyers (ESTH): 307-332-6805,
david@esthealth.org

Etheleen Potter (WRDF): 307-438-1826
windriverleprechaun90@yahoo.com

Community Advisory Board

The CAB helped host an open house on August 21st that showcased 2016 gardens and provided opportunities for interested community members to receive information about the project and be screened for eligibility. The next open house is scheduled for December 4th, 2-4pm at the Black Coal Senior Center at 4 Great Plains Rd. in Arapaho.

Notes from the CAB

By Gayle Woodsum

The Growing Resilience Community Advisory Board

What is it, why have it, and why should we care?

As winter descends, the Growing Resilience research project settles into itself. The first year has seen the establishment of the complex details of selecting participants, gathering and organizing each individual's health information, and enabling the bright light of the entire project to shine as 10 new family gardens were created, grown, harvested and enjoyed. Through these solid benchmarks of accomplishment, it's easy to identify two key components of the project: growing gardens and researching health.

There's a third component that's equally important, yet not so visible: the Growing Resilience Community Advisory Board. Community advisory boards are entities commonly included in these kinds of research projects that are not only based in communities, but have a real impact on the lives of the people who live in those communities. The Growing Resilience Community Advisory Board, or CAB, was established in the

original grant application that led to the project's funding from the National Institutes of Health.

The Wind River Indian Reservation has a very long history with governmental and academic research being conducted here. Not all of that history has been positive or productive for tribal members. Yet, research has the potential for organizing information, stories, experiences and realities in a way that help them become powerful tools for influencing funding and policies beneficial to the community. And, as with the Growing Resilience research project, action research has the added advantage of immediately expanding community resources like the gardens that are being created with the help of this project's funding.

So, the history of community-based research has taught us there can be great advantages to conducting it, and there can also be great peril. Which is why many kinds of protections are now built into research planning and implementation — protections that focus on assurance that a high standard of ethics and transparent conduct are adhered to every step of the way.



Community Advisory Boards came into being as a means of having community members be involved as important members of research projects, to serve as conduits of caring concern, oversight and communication between researchers, participants and community. The Growing Resilience CAB is also in place to listen and respond to questions, concerns, suggestions and complaints from those directly involved with the project and from the community in general. CAB members will also be sharing general information about the project with the community as the project progresses.

Five Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone community members currently serve on the Growing Resilience CAB. Rhonda Bowers, Pat Harris, Kathryn Lone Fight, Darrah Perez and Nelson P. White (in alphabetical order), each bring unique experiences and interests to their willingness to serve in this capacity. They are all passionately concerned for the welfare of the community, and deeply invested in helping to improve individual and community health. A non-voting role for the CAB to provide administrative support to its members and the research project issues they decide to address, is filled by Gayle Woodsum, a community activist who works with the grassroots organization Feeding Laramie Valley in Laramie.



All people involved with this research project, but in particular its participants, are encouraged to make the acquaintance of the members of the Growing Resilience CAB, and to contact them in general or through request for a specific CAB member, by contacting board member Rhonda Bowers at 307.840.2256 or rbowers@uwyo.edu, who will then connect you with the member you want to reach.

Meet and ask questions of Growing Resilience CAB members at the upcoming project celebration lunch for participants on Sunday, December 4, from noon – 1:00 p.m. at the Arapaho Senior Center.

Gardener Spotlight

By Melvin L. Arthur, UW

The Bearing family live in the Beaver Creek housing area and they have successfully completed their first season in the GR project. The family's head gardener reported that everything they planted grew, but critters ate most of the corn before they could harvest the crop. When I visited the Bearing's family garden in early October, there were cabbage and pumpkins still growing in their raised bed. The family ate everything that they grew in the garden, and it provided them with produce that they probably would not have purchased, or may have been too expensive.



The gardening intervention has been a new activity for the entire family. The kids were also present at the time of the visit to the garden and expressed their anticipation for next season and planting more items than they did this year. The Bearing family expects to continue their garden beyond the scope of this study, and the family appreciates the support and efforts of all parties associated with the GR project.

Project Updates

- **August 19-20 and 26-27, 2016:** UW and WHF staff hosted data collection sessions from 7-11am each day for the first round of participants. Breakfast (including burritos from the Lander Bake Shop!) was included each day.
- **August 21st, 2016:** GR staff and the CAB hosted a harvest festival/open house where the

community was invited to participate in a showcase of the success of the first season for the GR project. We also screened 7 new families for eligibility in participating in the 2017 growing season.

- **September 26-27, 2016:** GR partners from UW, ESTH, BMA, and the WRDF attended and presented posters at the First Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition in Prior Lake, Minnesota at the Mystic Lake Casino. You can look at the posters on the GR website.
- **November 2, 2016:** UW project partners presented methods and baseline results from GR at the American Public Health Association annual conference in Denver. Over 60 people attended the presentation. You can view the presentation on the GR website.

Upcoming Events

- **August 2016 – January 2017:** ESTH, WRDF, and the CAB will work on recruiting 46 new families to participate in 2017.
- **December 4, 2016:** We will host the next GR open house at the Black Coal Senior Center in Arapaho from 2-4pm. Stop by to meet the CAB, learn more about the project, and get screened for eligibility to participate in GR in 2017. Refreshments will be provided!
- **Mid-February:** The next data collection session is scheduled for mid-February, 2017.

First Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition

By Melvin L. Arthur, UW

As a group, we traveled to the First Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition held at the Mystic Lake Casino, Prior Lake, Minnesota. Christine, Alyssa, Mel, Etheleen, Dave, and Naomi represented Growing Resilience. The first day of sessions was extremely informative because it gave me a sense of where we are, in terms of successes, when compared to other food sovereignty projects. I believe we were the only group that was working on a NIH grant in a reservation setting. The

conference was centered on nutrition, but everyone was working on projects that involve food and sustainability. I heard the word food sovereignty thrown around in various conversations and from the speakers. When I attended the poster presentation session, a woman also gave me information on a webinar concerning Farm to School projects.

Everyone who spoke at the conference told personal stories about their reservations and their lives, work that is transpiring, and what they hope for the future. Faith Spotted Eagle also spoke about historical trauma and “Red Rage.” Her perspectives always resonate with me because of her ability to explain the complexities of our assimilation and acculturation, and how these aspects of our lives get played out every day.

I attended numerous sessions on the social determinants of health and nutrition, and I saw many ways that social determinants define the barriers that exist and contribute the health disparities in the WRR. One example is our lack of options because acculturation has outsourced the healthier diets that once existed. The generational knowledge that encompasses healthier times in the WRR is a common theme among the GR intervention participants, as well as my ongoing qualitative evaluation of the project. My “fantasy” is to get a clearer picture of what the community would want the next step (after Growing Resilience) to be.

In summary, the First Annual Conference on Native American Nutrition gave me the sense that we are on the cutting edge of defining the work, and the sessions I attended helped me to see what we are up against in respect to our own historical trauma, and what that means for the people of the WRR.

American Public Health Association (APHA) Conference

The UW Team attended the APHA 2016 Annual Meeting & Expo in Denver Colorado, held October 29-November 2. The conference was attended by over 12,000 participants and is considered to be

one of the biggest conferences in the US. Dr. Christine Porter, Alyssa Wechsler, and Melvin Arthur represented the GR project and gave two presentations that included the successes of the project and one that covered the methods and early results in the WRR. Dr. Porter and Ms. Wechsler informed the audience on the history of the work that has been completed in the WRR and let the audience know how this work has been largely successful in terms of participation and community involvement. One of the highlights of the GR presentations were the short video produced by Etheleen Potter which told the story of her grandson who wanted to make pickles from the cucumbers in their garden. The audience was very responsive and in total we have gained positive exposure at the national level.

About this Newsletter

The *GR Inside Scoop* is to share news about, with and by the project partners, especially the families who are participating in the project. Please send your ideas, feedback, photos and stories to the newsletter editor, Melvin Arthur. (marthur1@uwyo.edu or 307 231 6414)

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www.growingresilience.org

