

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Teaching life skills to reservation youth through tradition and modern methods

### AT A GLANCE

Reservation youth learn how to gather, preserve and prepare indigenous foods, respectfully and responsibly using traditional techniques and modern conveniences.

### The Situation

Tribes have traditional ways of gathering their indigenous foods that require learning the old ways from the elders and knowledge keepers. However, many families may not have access to education in the old ways, or the old ways are not being passed down to the next generation.

Many youths ask to learn how to process, preserve and prepare meat and fish in a way that aligns with traditional knowledge and values. They have also expressed concerns about ensuring they hunt, fish and gather correctly and they want to understand the “why” behind the methods the elders have used for generations.

Youth have also asked about using modern conveniences in the process of gathering, preserving and preparing indigenous or traditional foods. Each tribe and sometimes each clan within a tribe, have learned slightly different ways of doing things, but there is always respect at the root of it all. It is therefore important for the youth to understand the basics and feel encouraged to keep learning and asking questions for better understanding and building life skills.



Youth prepare unique appetizers from indigenous foods that were served at the opening reception of the food summit.

### Our Response

To better equip our youth with the knowledge they will need to respectfully and responsibly gather their traditional or indigenous foods the planning team added a youth track to the 9th Annual HIPT Food Summit – Reflecting on the Past, Co-Creating the Future. (HIPT is an acronym for Helping Indigenous People Thrive. HIPT is also the Nez Perce language word for food.) This is the second time a youth track has been offered as part of the annual food summit.

One focus area of the youth track is to provide hands-on experience for young people to learn from elders using fresh harvests of deer and steelhead. Youth were presented with the opportunity to take part in dressing the deer, cutting the meat, vacuum sealing the meat,

cleaning and filleting the fish as well as cooking the meat and fish. The result led to the youth sampling the food they prepared.

Educational sessions also highlighted traditional gatherings for plant-based food. A well-respected Tribal elder shared a lesson on gathering roots and berries using traditional tools and methods. This elder also provided education on how to serve the food in a culturally respectable way using customary displaying of the food.

Excitingly, this year's event included an additional impactful experience for five youths to work with a Tribal chef creating dishes. The opportunity to learn how to prepare traditional foods as appetizers was facilitated. Youth were chosen because they communicated an interest in a career in the culinary arts. Together the group made two recipes from scratch with the chef using bison burger, huckleberries, pine nuts and other indigenous ingredients. These appetizers were served on the opening night of the food summit to attendees.

### Program Outcomes

Event planners expected 20 youths to attend the youth track sessions based on previous events. However, pleasantly surprised, 32 youth registered, representing three local school districts and two out of state schools.

For many of the students this was their first time attending a youth food summit, and a survey of the youth in attendance revealed differing levels of experience with their exposure to traditional ways.

- Only 22% of youth identified as having gone hunting for deer before
- Only three male youth identified as have participated in skinning/dressing a deer before
- All youths (male and female) were extended the hands-on opportunity with the processing of deer and steelhead
- Nearly half of the participants identified as having fished for more than one type of fish

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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All the youth participants took part in the hands-on portion of the meat or fish preparation, preserving and cooking. During open discussion, many of the youth expressed this as the first time they had cooked venison or steelhead. Every participant tried the food without hesitation, and many went back for more.

The youth who participated in cooking with the chef had expressed how fun it was to prepare the food. They each shared their favorite part of the experience with the main theme being how much they learned about pairing different ingredients to make a unique dish.

### The Future

Organizers are planning for the 10th HIPT Food Summit to be held in 2027, and it will include a youth learning track. Anticipating more youth participants for the upcoming year is reasonable and celebrated. Youth education, surrounding traditional ways of living and food, helps to connect youth to their culture while also developing important life skills. Many of the adult participants expressed how they would like to also have an opportunity to learn hands-on meat and fish processing. In response, the planning team is in discussion on how to expand workshop sessions for all.

### Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The 9th Annual HIPT Food Summit was sponsored by University of Idaho Extension, Nimiipuu Reservation (Nez Perce), Nez Perce Tribe, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, 'itam'yanaawit Program, Arrowleaf Consulting, Northwest Indian College, Cutting Edge Credit Union, wisteqn'eemit and Nez Perce Tourism.



Tribal elder sharing knowledge and traditional practice of deer harvesting by engaging youth through hands-on participation.