

Transcript for "Native Culture & Health - a Warm Springs Digital Story" produced at KWSO radio. KWSO is part of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Health & Human Services Department. This is for the NIH "Storytelling about Health and Wellness in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities" Challenge.

Video link: https://youtu.be/Y5nU5fi_E88

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For the people of the Columbia River and the High Plateau of Middle Oregon – life historically revolved around the seasons. The cycle of food gathering, raising children, learning from elders and a spiritual lifeway sustained villages and communities.

Hunting, fishing and gathering were physical tasks woven into everyday life. Family members each played a role. All roles were critical in survival.

When the Warm Springs Indian Reservation of Oregon was established by the Treaty of 1855, Tribal Members moved from their ancestral homelands along the Columbia River and its Tributaries to the high desert of Central Oregon in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. Northern Paiute people moved to the reservation in the late 1800s having come from areas in South Eastern Oregon, Eastern California and Western Nevada.

Although the Treaty guaranteed the right to hunt, fish and gather foods at all the usual and accustomed places... the abrupt disruption to a way of life has had lasting impacts.

Where once natural foods made up the people's diet – there was the introduction of western foods such as sugar and flour. Policies to "civilize" Native Americans replaced the daily physical gathering tasks with work related to farming. The providing of material goods set aside the routine of creating what was needed for survival.

More than 160 years later – the Warm Springs Reservation Community faces significant health challenges. The change of lifestyle, the introduction of unhealthy habits, the negative impact of relocation and oppression have been detrimental. Today, many suffer from chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, diabetes, substance abuse and accidents.

High levels of risk factors are observed throughout the community, but personal choices underlie the cause of many illnesses and injuries. Reducing risks and charting a path to better health is a very high priority for the reservation's health system and the community. (Annual Health System report for the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, 2016)

For both adults and especially youth evidence based Tribal Best Practices include the reduction of Negative Risk Factors and the Increase of Protective Factors. (CTWS Tribal Community and Justice Profile CTAS Narrative, 2015)

Research has suggested that protective factors that promote Indian health and healing include: connectedness to family, emotional health, and culturally specific programs that strengthen family ties and spiritual orientation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011)

KWSO Archival Audio from Autwai Adeline Miller:

- *“Years back they never had longhouses. The families would be out somewhere and then they'd say ‘the roots are right’ and they'd get two or three families together and all gather at one place. And even then, they didn't have new material to get – but they'd get out their brightest material and their brightest clothes to put on. But they made sure they had new moccasins. Something new to wear to show the creator that they appreciated that they were going to have new roots for the year. And that was just our way.”*

By working across programs like Juvenile Justice, Youth Wellness, Behavioral Health, Community Health, Culture & Heritage, Human Services, Drug & Alcohol Prevention a common thread of cultural learnings is being pulled to engage people in our community into positive activities.

KWSO Archival Program about Soaring Butterflies, Warrior Spirit Group:

- Autwai Lucinda Green: "We had about 8 beginner cutters and you can tell. But the fish will still taste good. It's good – it's good teaching"
- Volunteer Kanet Wofle: "Yesterday they was getting taught. Teaching how to cut salmon and deer meat. Oh it's very important for them to learn their own culture and their language. And when they grow up they need to teach their kids the meaning of longhouse way."
- Student: "I learned how to make my first drum. It turned out well. The picture I put on it is a hummingbird cause that's my grandma's indian name. Cause there is barely anyone that knows how to teach this stuff and we are running out of people who knows how to do it."
- Deanie Johnson: "We started out in the Soaring Butterflies, Warrior Spirit class at the Middle School. Before the feast even came up, we talked about gathering and the traditional foods and getting ready and preparing for them for us to get ready to dig. It was a real blessing today to go out and gather with them and it was a lot of fun. Heard a lot of fun stories and we had a good time."

Activities can involve traditional practices, dance , song, language and history. In addition to the classes, groups and events themselves – community media reinforces the learning content, pushes out messages about opportunities and celebrates the efforts.

Collecting data over time from those who have engaged in learning about distinctive cultural practices and the history of historical impacts affecting Tribal lifeways will demonstrate success in individuals making healthier choices. Learning opportunities have specific content goals and additionally relationships between people are nurtured & individuals are able to connect to their heritage while forging a positive path forward.