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Strengthening Sustainable Agriculture Programming with American Indian Producers in the West

A Professional Development Program...

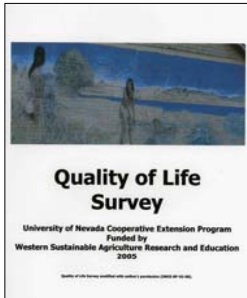
Funded by
Western Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education (WSARE)

Program Overview

This Western Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (WSARE) professional development program addresses the educational needs of agricultural professionals working with American Indian producers and governments in a four-state region in the western U.S. The curriculum seeks to address issues and needs unique to agriculture professionals working with American Indian producers and governments on reservations. It features analyses of primary and secondary data.

Research conducted from 2005 through 2007 included face-to-face interviews, online and mail surveys with participating reservations designed for American Indian participants and agriculture professionals working on reservations. The surveys featured identical questions in order to compare perceived quality of life indicators on Indian reservations. Specifically, survey questions enabled comparison and contrast of attitudes towards adoption of sustainable agriculture practices on reservations, held by American Indian producers and agriculture professionals. Secondary data were analyzed, including an historical review of Federal Indian policies and the effects of policies of reservation quality of life.

Quality of life survey research [online and face-to-face] was extended through December 2007 to increase the number of participants from reservations in Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. Data analysis is currently taking place.



The draft chapters of the curriculum are completed and are undergoing the review process.

Curriculum Development

Chapter One American Indians of the Western Range: Columbia Plateau and Great Basin

The American Indians of the western range refers to those tribes who reside in the western U.S., bordered on the west by the Sierra and Cascade Mountains and on the east by the Rocky Mountains. This chapter introduces the curriculum by starting from the beginning, describing and honoring the early cultures of American Indian people who have lived in this region for generations. This chapter outlines the educational purpose and value of the curriculum, identifies its target audience and identifies overall learning objectives. It also describes the four-state area targeted in the curriculum, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington, and highlights selected American Indian reservations located within the four-state area.



Chapter Five The Structure of Tribal Government and the Federal Relationship

The history of American Indians is unique in that Indian people over the last hundreds of years have been influenced by non-Indian social, economic and political influences. Historians have provided several accounts about the identity of the American Indian beginning with a kinship group and/or clan untouched by civilization and resulting into a 21st Century American Indian Tribe. (Goldberg-Ambrose, 1994)

In this chapter, we will explore two key concepts that characterize American Indians relationship with the federal government. There will be an explanation of the characteristics of tribal governments and an explanation of the unique relationships between the federal government and American Indians. The Confederated Tribes of the Coquille Reservation in Washington and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Tribe in Oregon are highlighted.



Chapter Two Federal Indian Policy: A Brief Overview

An understanding of contemporary quality of life issues on American Indian reservations in the U.S. requires at least a rudimentary awareness of the history of Federal Indian policy. This chapter provides a brief overview of these policies spanning two centuries, beginning with the Trade and Intercourse policy era and concluding with the Self-Determination policy era. The roles of the Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny in shaping these policies are considered. Recent Federal Indian policies are presented which reflect shifting sociopolitical views of Federal policy makers and the self-determination efforts of American Indians.



Chapter Six Self Determination and Independence

The history of American Indian Affairs is based on the idea that American Indians need to function and survive in modern civilization. It is only until recently that the culture, survival, ingenuity and independence of the American Indian has become an important part of federal American Indian policy. Federal Indian Affairs began by the concept of assimilating American Indians and placing the Indian people on specific reservations creating new group life expectations of federal administration interdependence (Goldberg-Ambrose, 1994). In 1975, after years of federal domination, the policy of Indian Affairs changed again in an effort to promote American Indian independence. The term to be discussed in this chapter and for this new era of Indian Affairs is "American Indian Self-Determination."



Chapter Three American Indian Land Tenure

The Federal government enacted several policies in the 1800s to motivate development and settlement of the western U.S. One Federal policy, in particular, the General Allotment Act (1887), was intended to settle American Indian peoples who had historically been semi-nomadic. The General Allotment Act (1887) would dramatically influence American Indian land tenure for generations.

This chapter discusses the effects of this policy on American Indian land tenure. It defines and distinguishes various Indian land tenure types that exist today. It considers the potential challenges that complex Indian land tenure presents to achieving economically efficient and sustainable natural resource management decisions and actions.



Chapter Seven Implementing Agriculture and Natural Resource Programs for American Indians

Agriculture activities occur in many different ways on reservations. It is all about the photographic lens that we choose when driving onto that reservation and working with the people that gives us perspectives. The complexities of land tenure designations on American Indian reservations have created additional layers of frustration when trying to get farm bill programs on the ground. This chapter provides examples and the perspectives when implementing agriculture and natural resource related programs for American Indian agriculture producers and tribes. Key concepts of reframing problems into opportunities and there is more than one right answer are discussed. It is all about implementing the appropriate programs to the reservation environment and the needs of the reservation. Specific examples of agriculture on reservations are explained and the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program is highlighted.



Chapter Four Agriculture Irrigation and Water Rights

Agriculture professionals who desire to work on reservation lands must have a basic understanding of American Indian water rights. This chapter provides an overview of agriculture irrigation projects and water rights as they have evolved on reservation lands. Water rights allocation issues on reservation lands are as complicated as land tenure issues. This chapter attempts to explain the complexities of these issues and raise awareness of the unique considerations concerning fee structures of BIA irrigation systems, water right settlements and the future demand for water. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and Walker River Paiute Tribe are highlighted.



Chapter Eight Quality of Life on American Indian Reservations in Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington: Analyses of Perceptions

This chapter presents the results of the analyses of primary data collected between 2005 and 2007, from American Indians living on reservations and agriculture professionals on reservations in Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. The purpose of collecting and analyzing these data is to provide insight into perceptual differences regarding quality of life issues on selected American Indian reservations within the western range as defined earlier.

Perceptions of quality of life issues are compared between American Indians who live on reservations and agriculture professionals who work with American Indian producers and tribal officials on reservations. Similarities and differences are identified. Perceptual differences that may impede the efficacy of these professionals to work with American Indians on reservations are considered. Finally, this chapter explores strategies to improve the capacity for natural resource and agriculture professionals who work on reservations in order to strengthen sustainable agriculture practices on reservation lands.



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