



# Teaching Traditional Diet and Environmental Justice to Urban Youth Participating in the Native Youth Enrichment Program's Digital Storytelling Workshop

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## BACKGROUND

### UW IWRI Mission:

The mission at the University of Washington's Indigenous Wellness Research Institute (IWRI) is to marshal community, tribal, academic, and governmental resources toward innovative, culture-centered interdisciplinary, collaborative social and behavioral research and education. Within IWRI, the Native Youth Enrichment Program (NYEP) is a culturally based program intended to promote Native youth in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

### Project Description and Purpose:

In 2011 NYEP ran two digital storytelling workshops. The first focused on "self-efficacy." Students were asked to contemplate their self-identity – as a person, as a Native American, as a high school student looking toward their future. The second focused on both traditional and current Native diet, nutrition and health outcomes. After attending the foundation-building workshops, each student created a three to five minute multimedia story based on information that was taught in the sessions.

The purpose of the digital storytelling workshops was to provide nearly 40 middle and high school aged urban Native youth with an opportunity for personal reflection, development of technical and communication skills, creation of bonds within their local Native community, and knowledge about their heritage.

Resource: Indigenous Wellness Research Institute website, accessed at <http://www.iwri.org/>

## SPECIFIC AIM

Develop and help teach a curriculum that would help students learn about the traditional Native diet, nutritional benefits of these foods, health outcomes that have resulted from the change in diet, revitalization of the traditional diet and the relationship between food and the environment.

## METHODS

- Ran weekly Lessons of Indigenous Foods and Environment (LIFE) meetings
- Reviewed the literature to guide curriculum development
- Assisted with recruitment for the digital storytelling workshops
- Invited guest speakers to participate in the foundation building sessions
- Developed and taught lessons on:
  - Health implications
  - Invasive species
  - Revitalization of traditional diet
- Gained field experience tutoring students at their schools
- Helped students come up with interview questions to ask during one on one meetings with community elders
- Was ready to help students brainstorm ideas, write, edit and photograph during the digital storytelling workshops



## RESULTS

- Nearly 40 digital stories were created by students
- Participating students increased self efficacy and strengthened community bonds
- Students gained knowledge that they can use to make informed dietary choices
- Many participants involved family members in their digital stories and brought their family to the first digital story showcase. This helped spread knowledge about food and the environment
- Made a positive impact on students' and families' lives in the context of diet, environmental decisions, and pursuing education (for younger audience members)

## CONCLUSIONS

Digital stories created by the students are now being showcased at community events across Washington State; they are working to strengthen the Native community by bringing families, friends, elders, leaders and allies together. Future directions will include developing a facilitated guide for the digital stories. This will help involve audience members to participate in discussion of the "message" in each video. The intention is to have the audience learn the same concepts.

**Title:** Changes in Diet  
*Change in diet and diabetes come up with what changes are in the diet. How it is measured.*  
**Objective:** Show how much the diet has actually shifted from what it was. This has played a large role in negative health outcomes in Native populations.

**Presentation Time:** Total presentation: 45 minutes (15 minutes of interactive time, 5 minutes of wrap up and Q&A)

**Leaders:** Dara, Glenda, Jacinta

**Target Audience:** 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Graders

**Objectives:**

- Reasons why traditional foods are now harder to access
- Introduce commodity foods
- Identify health outcomes that have resulted in the loss of the traditional diet
- Discuss how what we eat influences our health

**Behavior Goals:**

- Learn to identify what differences are between traditional and current diet
- Learn barriers that exist to accessing traditional foods

**Components:**

- Presentations/Discussions
  - Link of access over time
  - Commodity Food Program
  - Health Outcomes: Type II Diabetes, Overweight/obesity, Metabolic Syndrome, Stroke, Cardiac Issues
- Interaction Time
  - Ask students to identify what they see in different from the traditional diet that Valerie presented
  - Continually ask questions that the students can "go" to increase attention
- Wrap-up/Question and Answer

