

Apsaalooke Health Literacy Project – Vanessa Simonds, PI

Project Summary.

Water quality is a major challenge of this century, impacting human health through both the food chain and recreational activities. Native Americans can be at high risk for increased exposure to environmental contaminants because of subsistence diets and spiritual and cultural practices that increase their likelihood of contact with contaminated soil and water. Members of the Apsaalooke Nation (Crow Tribe) continue cultural practices related to the water and also experience environmental contamination of their water sources.

Members of the Crow tribe have formed the Crow Environmental Health Steering Committee (CEHSC) and have decided that increasing environmental health literacy among community members is a key concern. The purpose of this project is to extend the collaborative partnership between CEHSC and Montana State University (MSU) researchers to address environmental health literacy on the Crow reservation through an intervention with Crow children who will serve as change agents. Children will be trained in environmental health literacy and leadership skills so that they may transfer skills and knowledge through their social networks of peers and family.

The partnership will address the following specific aims: extend the partnership between Crow tribal members, Little Big Horn College and MSU to increase environmental health literacy skills and knowledge among school-aged Apsaalooke children on the Crow reservation; develop a culturally-based health literacy skill-building intervention(s) for school-aged Native American children living on or near the Crow reservation; and implement and evaluate the intervention strategy. Year 1 of the project period will be devoted to extending the partnership, and identifying, planning, and adapting the intervention activities and evaluation measures. In Year 2, the partnership will implement the intervention with school-aged children and collect baseline measures of knowledge, attitudes, and behavior related to environmental health literacy. In Year 3, the partnership will collect follow-up measures. Based on preliminary findings the team will adapt the intervention and continue implementation in Years 3-5. Follow-up measures of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors will be collected over the course of the project implementation.

Relevance.

Working in collaboration with the Apsaalooke community, this study aims to develop and pilot an intervention to increase children's environmental health literacy skills and to transfer that knowledge and skills to others in their schools, families, and communities. The intervention developed in this project may be adapted and tested in other tribal communities to address environmental health disparities.