

# Fort Peck Reservation

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*Buffalo at the Tribal Buffalo Herd by Wendy Becker.*

**T**he Fort Peck Reservation is located in the northeast corner of Montana. There are 2,094,000 acres, with the southern border along the Missouri River. Poplar is the home to the Tribal Council headquarters. The Fort Peck Reservation is home to two separate American Indian Nations: Assiniboiné and Sioux, each composed of numerous bands and divisions. The reservation is isolated from Montana's populated areas as well as manufacturing centers, but does overlap the oil and gas developments. The largest employer on the Fort Peck Reservation is the Fort Peck Tribes. The main economic driver is agriculture with the land rich in natural resources.

## Pumpkin Patch and BeeHive

To encourage outdoor activities and agri-tourism during many COVID-related shutdowns on the Fort Peck Reservation, we grew the Pumpkin Patch for Kindergarten school kids to come out and learn about pumpkins. The pumpkin patch was planted around the beginning of June. Orange Smoothie is a good variety and size for young students to use. We also grew summer squash, native squashes, and Indian-Painted corn. An addition to the pumpkin patch this year was a bee hive to teach about the importance of pollinators and how their life cycles work. The hive was located a safe distance from the

pumpkins and produce so kids can also learn about safety. Over 100 students came to the pumpkin patch to learn the parts of a pumpkin, what we do with pumpkins, how they grow, and how to pick them. The students get the chance to pick them with the vine still attached so they get first hand learning on where pumpkins originate. The honey was later harvested, and even though there was a severe drought and many local hives were not full, the Tribal Extension Garden Hive was completely full. Frames were pulled in early September and harvested later. Over 50 pounds of honey were spun and bottled in two ounce containers to be given away to the Community Services Program.

## Growing Together Master Gardener Project

The Fort Peck Reservation Extension office partnered with the Fort Peck Tribes Community Services Program, Natural Resources Department, Health Promotion Disease Prevention program (HPDP), and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to teach about how to grow food.

We received a grant from the Growing Together Master Gardener Grant to purchase seed, supplies, amendments and

to test soil and water. The goal of the program was to learn about growing food under Master Gardener Program principles, and partner with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) to show how to eat healthier. All of the produce was to be given away to community members, The Tribal Elderly Program, and used for food demonstrations.

The Fort Peck Tribes gave the program three acres of land to use, as well as a large storage building. The NRCS and Natural Resources Department purchased two high tunnels to use. The HPDP partnered to help with funding for equipment and additional support hiring. The large garden grew over 4,695 pounds of food and netted 1,637 volunteer hours. The food was donated to more than 1,000 households. We also supplied seed for two other community gardens. Locally-grown garden produce led to several food tasting events including a chili tasting, three using the garden produce, and a salsa tasting with produce in a kit to make their own salsa. We also handed out several recipe items and low-budget cooking publications related to healthy eating. In addition to the Growing Together Master Gardener Grant, in-kind donations and equipment for the program totaled \$55,000.

## Progressive Agriculture Safety Day Virtual in Brockton

The Progressive Agriculture Safety Day was held virtually in Brockton School with 55 students and 10 volunteers participating. The original date had to be moved due to COVID and then was required to be held virtually. The Progressive Agriculture Foundation created videos to share with each of the second to sixth grade classes over the course of four weeks. Students learned about electrical safety, fire safety, farm equipment safety, bike safety, grain safety, ATV safety, and water safety. Local businesses and Tribal Departments donated items for all the students to use. The foundation also provided each student with t-shirts. According to the National Center for Child Safety, a child dies every three days in an agricultural-related accident. Every day, 33 children are injured in agriculture-related incidents as well. The Fort Peck Reservation is a very rural area, and agriculture is the leading enterprise, so it is important to teach our youth about agriculture around them, even though they may not live on a farm, many students visit farms or local businesses that support the agriculture industry.



**Top:** Pumpkin Patch Ready for the students., by Wendy Becker; **Bottom:** Garden Project Food Give Away on the Fort Peck Community College lawn, by Wendy Becker

## Fort Peck Reservation Staff



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