

## Mississippi Choctaw Federally Recognized Tribe Extension Program Ripple Effects Mapping Findings

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The Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILFT) engaged in a joint collaboration with an evaluation team and the Western Extension Risk Management Education Center to measure the long-term impacts of the Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program (FRTEP) serving the Mississippi Choctaw Tribe. In order to collect this information, the evaluation team used a tool called Ripple Effects Mapping (REM). REM is a storytelling technique that is used to collect stories and experiences from community members. The results at the completion of a Ripple Effects Mapping included both a visual map and a set of narratives that were subsequently analyzed.

The data from 31 FRTEP programs was summarized into a final report – *“Mapping FRTEP Impacts in Indian Country”* and published in March 2022 for the purpose of demonstrating the collective value of the programs. This report can be found at [tribalextension.org/success-stories](https://tribalextension.org/success-stories).

In April 2021, a virtual Ripple Effects Mapping event was held with Mississippi Choctaw Tribal members and others in the community who benefited from FRTEP programs or were aware of the impact of this programming. Those participating in the online event may have included farmers/ranchers, community members including agency and/or Tribal leadership, high school students, 4-H members, and others. Tribal and community members joined either online or by phone.

During the session, participants had the opportunity to tell us stories about how they have benefited from having FRTEP in their community. A facilitator led the conversation, asking each Tribal and/or community member to share their story one at a time. Questions participants were asked to consider included:

1. *Tell us a story about how one of these programs has had an impact on your Tribal community.*
2. *Are you or your family doing anything differently as a result of these programs?*
3. *What has been a personal benefit to you or your family because of these programs?*
4. *What has been the most helpful part of these programs for you, your family, or your Tribal community?*

As individuals spoke, their stories were both recorded and mapped into digital mapping software in order to visually display the impact. No individual’s names are included in this data set or the final report mentioned above. Following the REM, those stories were analyzed using the FRTEP priority program areas to determine the ways in which the FRTEP has impacted the Tribe and surrounding community. Additionally, the data was also analyzed to understand ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on programming.

This report includes all of the stories collected from the Mississippi Choctaw Tribe.

- Page 2 shows examples of ways you can use this information.
- Page 3 summarizes in themes and subthemes the ways in which the FRTEP program and you as the FRTEP educator/agent had impact in your Tribal community.
- Pages 4-9 includes these themes and all of the stories collected from your REM event.
- Page 10 is an image of the full REM Map, which is also attached as a PDF for reprinting. Additionally, a laminated poster of your REM MAP is being mailed to you, to share with community members, Tribal leaders and others vested in your programs.

If you would like to have an opportunity to discuss in further detail and/or have questions, we can set up a Zoom meeting with one of the Ripple Effects Mapping team members.

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## **How you can use your Ripple Effects Mapping data:**

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Storytelling is a powerful technique that can be used in many different ways. Your stories from REM helped us understand the impacts and value of FRTEP that can be shared with funders, Tribal members and leadership. More than numbers, stories can reveal needs, achievements and emotional real-life impacts. Your story examples can be used multiple ways to elevate the importance of the work that you are doing and to demonstrate the collective impact that it is having in your community

## **Here are three ways you can use the two edited story examples (below) while also utilizing the report's themes and subthemes to demonstrate the impacts this program is having:**

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### **Within the Community**

- Stories can be shared or incorporated into community celebrations and/or events.
- Communicated to your Advisory Committee to help build capacity for future programming.

### **In Reports**

- Prepared reports Tribal Council members and other community leaders with story examples, themes and subthemes that show how FRTEP is working to accomplish the priority areas established by the Tribal Advisory Council; and which relay the benefits, impacts and other indicators of success as a result of FRTEP.
- Prepared reports for your 1862 Land Grant University or your 1994 Tribal College or University leadership with story examples embedded and that include the themes and sub themes from each of the program's priority areas. Highlight how the Ripple Effects Mapping session empowered community members to share their stories and the benefits inherent in discovering the successes brought about by the program

### **In Grant Applications**

- Having a solid evaluation plan is critical to writing a successful grant application. Including outcomes from the Ripple Effects Mapping demonstrates the long-lasting impacts of FRTEP and uses a culturally appropriate approach to do so.

*In summary, the stories and data that you have collected through the Ripple mapping process can be used many different ways to communicate your successes and to elevate your program not only at the community level – but also to your stakeholder partners, collaborators and other individuals, organizations and entities, for the purpose of strengthening and building the capacity of FRTEP.*

## Themes and Subthemes

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For the Mississippi Choctaw Tribe and community, the impacts, effects, and benefits could all be found within the following five program priority areas and subthemes are listed here. On pages 4-9, you will see the same priority areas, subthemes with individual stories collected directly from the transcript.

### **1. American Indian Cultural and Linguistic Preservation**

- Engaging Tribal Members in Tribal Traditions

### **2. Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement**

- Professional Development
- Strengthening Communities

### **3. Indian Farmer and Rancher Productivity and Management**

- Support for Farmers
- Support for Ranchers
- Support for Future and New Farmers and Ranchers
- Barriers

### **4. Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction**

- Community Involvement
- Exercise

### **5. Natural Resource Conservation and Bio-energy Development**

- Fish and Wildlife Conservation

### **6. Tribal Youth and 4-H**

- Life skills

### **Response to COVID**

- Adaptation of Programs and Services
- COVID Adversely Impacting Program and Service Delivery

### **Overall**

- Connections and Partnerships
- Cultural Understanding and Respect

## Themes, Subthemes and Stories

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
<b>American Indian Cultural and Linguistic Preservation</b>	Engaging Tribal members in Tribal traditions	And I think we're trying to develop more things, more training if possible, and also trying to maintain a lot of traditions that we've lost. And as our areas are getting smaller and smaller, we're trying to promote some things like growing a river cane. That's a cultural aspect of Choctaw family here that ties a lot of things to the personal life of a Choctaw family, but we're losing areas to where we can grow that. It's a way that they make baskets here. They strip the baskets. And that's what to a lot of families carry, store their clothes, store their food, and carry their food. Or it was used to serve, and just is integrated into the lifestyle of Tribal families for many generations. But also identifying what kind of trees that we can make our drums with. The drum has kind of reemerged again. A lot of Tribal members are more interested in being drummers and also having their own drums. So we've had some settings to where some technical things have been done to try to identify more areas, but also more settings to where some people learn how to find the basic things to make a drum. So a lot of the things that we kind of identify with, well, mapping, I guess, it's another thing that we're trying to identify in our programs where Tribal members that are wanting to find some of these things, we can at least be able to help to identify.
<b>American Indian Cultural and Linguistic Preservation</b>	Engaging Tribal members in Tribal traditions	FRTEP has provided several areas to provide technical assistance and develop skills. And I think accelerated our recouping of some of our traditions that we have lost, but also reinvigorate it to the youth that's coming up today. And I think that just makes us a stronger community.
<b>American Indian Cultural and Linguistic Preservation</b>	Engaging Tribal members in Tribal traditions	There is one project that we've worked on that I failed to mention but may be of interest to your mapping is, [The agent] and I have worked on trying to get the traditional method for [vegetable] production, which is a traditional food. We do that as part of our personal vocational adjustment training. We make the [vegetable] in the traditional method, but the traditional method involves some water. And she has been working with us with some food scientists to try to make that product be shelf stable because our museum here has interest in selling that because people are coming and wanting to try traditional [vegetable]. But it's not something we have completed yet, but it's been something that we've worked on, but it still needs some work.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
<b>Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement</b>	Professional development	<p>And so [vocational rehabilitation] utilizes this work to teach people how to work and how to anticipate the expectations of the work world. With that type of work, we have, number one, we have a need to market our blueberries. And through the farmer's market program that the Extension service runs, [our clients] are able to market our blueberries without actually having to independently do that and take away from the work that we're doing, training people with disabilities. So, we enjoy that relationship with the Extension services here with the Tribe. Also, with our greenhouse operation, we have quite a few [needs for] technical assistance. So those things vary from time to time and we're able to go to our Extension agent and express what those needs are, and they may not know personally, how to respond to that need, or they may, but they always have a wealth of connections with [the local] University, primarily experts in different fields, whether it is dealing with pests or dealing with irrigation or dealing with fertilizer or whatever... And ultimately, this means that people with disabilities could work and they are able to financially support themselves and their family members as well as being a role model for their children and teach those types of skills to their children so that their children also have those transferable work skills to be able to one day enter into the workplace themselves.</p>
<b>Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement</b>	Professional development	<p>And the interesting thing that I've been able to witness recently is that some of the individuals who went through our program are now talking about retirement. And so that's pretty exciting to me that I've been able to see an individual enter into the workplace and then work 30 years and then be thinking about actually retiring from the workplace. So there's numerous examples of people that are able to self-support, they rely on government programs for their self support, but once they are able to get into employment that matches their interests and abilities with the support of vocational rehabilitation, then they're able to use their skills and to be able to be successful in the workplace and be able to earn their money through employment.</p>

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
<p><b>Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement</b></p>	<p>Professional development</p>	<p>Well, we have a [Tribal] Youth Conservation Corps. FRTEP was a big part of that, helping us get the right kind of professionals involved, so that we can show an array of what the natural resource programs are out there. Because sciences are not a big avenue for people that want to go to school. Everybody goes to school for healthcare, business, where the money is made. Just the responses of having those professionals, natural resource professionals, come out, tell their story, give some of their examples of some of their work, and just to show that they exhibit that passion of what they do. The kids take it home a little bit more. I've heard stories from the kids' parents that come back and say, "Oh, that speaker you had today, my kid did nothing but talk about it all night long, what we did that day." And it pushes that appreciation, that love, for what they might want to go into. Whereas like I said earlier, you could tell someone to go, "Hey, go speak to this group of kids." And they say, "They're really not into it." When the kids leave that day, they were like, "Well, that was a waste of an hour." Whereas if it's someone that's passionate about it and showing what they love to do, the kids take it back home and talk about it and tell their friends about it and spread the word. And I mean, that's free advertisement on some of the things that you're trying to get out there. So, I guess that's one of my biggest things is to see the kids' smiles, to see the kids actually get involved. Because sometimes kids want to sit back. They don't really want to participate. But when they see the passion that the individual has given, they jump in there. They actually participate or they actually become part of the situation. Yeah, that's one of my pluses there.</p>
<p><b>Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement</b></p>	<p>Strengthening communities</p>	<p>And so this has benefited us a lot because we're able to produce a better product and keep our customers happy with the products that leave our facility, because if we lose our customers, then we don't have any work and if we don't have any work, we can't train people with disabilities to go to work. So these are the kinds of ways that right off the top of my head, let me know how we are able do our job better by the support and the training. And ultimately, this means that people with disabilities could work and they are able to financially support themselves and their family members as well as being a role model for their children and teach those types of skills to their children so that their children also have those transferable work skills to be able to one day enter into the workplace themselves.</p>

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
<b>Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement</b>	Strengthening communities	<p>And also, the [Tribal] Fresh Produce also started from a program of some funding that was available through federal programs and it is providing numerous jobs, but also providing a good service for selling vegetables back to the resort, which is one of our other industries we have here. So, it was kind of creating an environment for wage earning, supplying one of your vendors. But also, a side asset to those, is the relationships that you promote or create like [Tribal] Fresh Produce, we'll have early childhood kids come to see how tomatoes are grown, what is kale, so they can cut kale because not a lot of small kids have heard about kale. And the schools also get to come out and see how that's produced.</p>
<b>Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction</b>	Community involvement	<p>And then another way the tying of traditions was connected to was with the green re-entry program that the department of justice had a program to where it tried to help youth juveniles, detainees to kind of get, I guess, chaperoned back into the community, by interacting through growing of gardens, and they're interacting with elders and maybe having an opportunity, sometimes some programs don't do a real big thing. If anything, at least starts a conversation, but here I have a chance to talk. Sometimes when people talk, is when they learn something. And some people may not ever get to talk unless some kind of programs brings them together. So I think that's some of the things that kind of brought that, but also I think it introduced some more people to want to get interested in doing gardens.</p>
<b>Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction</b>	Exercise	<p>I am so glad and happy and excited [to see] Tribal members exercising every day. The Extension agent with the diabetes department, they always had a program healthy exercising, eating right. And of course we have high diabetes on the reservation. So, it's just every day going home or going to work or coming back from lunch or going to lunch, things like that. I see Tribal members, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00, actually exercising, walking. And I like seeing that.</p>

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
<b>Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction</b>	Exercise	<p>I believe we work with [the agent] as well on some of our runs. We host a few runs. We have our fall walk, our annual fall walk and our annual spring walk. And also we have our unity walk, which is our biggest walk. And that's one thing that I really enjoy. It's a lot of work, but we have a lot of programs that we work with. [For] the unity walk, each stickball team, we have, I believe, I want to say up to 16 stickball teams. And they come from different communities. And what they would do is they will start a certain time. Each team would start different times. Some would start 6:00 AM, some start 7:00 AM. And they would walk from their community all the way to the main community. And when the teams get together, all the teams walk together and this is our biggest walk. They walk together. And just to see all the teams walking together in unifying its Tribe and come walking into the amphitheater, I don't know, that part right there, it's an amazing sight to see.</p>
<b>Natural Resource Conservation and Bio-energy Development</b>	Fish and wildlife conservation	<p>Well, I have a lot. I've been here for 27 years. And [the current agent] is the fifth Extension agent that I'm working for. And there's a lot of stories I can tell, but all I can say is past Extension agents, I can tell y'all what they have done. Let me start off with forestry wildlife education. There was a forestry herbicide short course, Tribal tree seedling giveaway program, forestry best management practice, hunter education program, urban forestry training, wildlife management through nutrition workshop. And there was [the county] Wildlife Jamboree. And then years later we had Tribal Wildlife Jamboree, wildlife food plots demonstration.</p>
Tribal Youth and 4-H	Life skills	<p>And 4-H and youth development, there was one of the community, they had farm pond safety and archery program, 4-H entomology camp that the kids went in Mathiston, Mississippi, 4-H and boys and girls club entomology mini camp. Crystal Ridge Reservation, that's another community. 4-H club forestry program and tree dedication, forestry training, bicycle safety program, environmental science and forestry field trip to Noxubee Refuge. 4-H kids went to Mississippi State University campus to visit the animals at the dairy farm. They go to the campus to visit all kinds of departments that they have that 4-H kids can learn or what they're studying about that month. In horticulture, they had beginners landscape workshop.</p>



Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
<b>Response to COVID</b>	Adaptation of programs and services	And we've worked with so many programs and that's all I can remember right now. But after COVID a lot of things changed. Of course, everybody went virtual and [the agent] has sent a lot of stuff to us that we've sent our participants through emails.
<b>Response to COVID</b>	COVID adversely impacting program and service delivery	We had to stop our Monday classes because the hospital was closed to the public. And... right now, the only thing we're doing is we're just waiting on, hopefully everything opening up pretty soon. And that's about it.
<b>Response to COVID</b>	COVID adversely impacting program and service delivery	And because of the [agent]... I was told to participate in activities that an agent or my coworkers [were] planning, I had participated and kind of just threw myself into losing weight and I did. But because of the pandemic and all other stuff, I gained some back, but I have not given up. And having Tribal members coming up to me and say I inspire them to work out and I'm like, "Go at it. Don't give up. Keep doing it."
<b>Overall</b>	Connections and partnerships	The avenues to resources that we may not have here on hand has probably been one of the biggest pluses. And to top that off, it seemed like the FRTEP program we've had here, puts us in connection with people that are passionate in the same things that we're passionate about.
<b>Overall</b>	Cultural understanding and respect	FRTEP as a whole has done a very good job of just being culturally sensitive and bringing in agents that are willing to learn the ways of the Tribes that they work with because in the national aspect, that's not necessarily so for programs that are Tribally based. Some of them still have a lot of bridges that they're trying to connect as far as cultural sensitivity, but FRTEP's done a very good job of bringing in people that are willing to learn the ways of the Tribes they work for.

# Image of Ripple Effects Map

