

Choctaw (Oklahoma) Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program Ripple Effects Mapping Findings

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 Choctaw (Oklahoma) 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.

In May 2021, a virtual Ripple Effects Mapping event was held with Choctaw (Oklahoma) 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 Choctaw (Oklahoma) 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 4-12 includes these themes and all of the stories collected from your REM event.
- Page 13 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.

Rebecca Sero, r.sero@outlook.com;
Debra Hansen, debra.ann.hansen@gmail.com; and
JoAnn Warner, warnerj@wsu.edu

How you can use your Ripple Effects Mapping data:

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:

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

For the Choctaw (Oklahoma) 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 4-12, you will see the same priority areas, subthemes with individual stories collected directly from the transcript.

1. American Indian Cultural and Linguistic Preservation

- Engaging Tribe in their traditions

2. Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement

- Professional development
- Economic development

3. Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction

- Adult involvement
- Community involvement
- Family involvement
- Healthy food choices
- School involvement
- Traditional foods
- Youth involvement

4. Tribal Youth and 4-H

- Gardening and nutrition
- Tribal Culture

Response to COVID

- Adaptation of programs and services
- Clarifying values because of COVID
- COVID adversely impacting program and service delivery

Themes, Subthemes and Stories

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
American Indian Cultural and Linguistic Preservation	Engaging Tribes in their traditions	Through the process of colonization, we lost many of our traditional foods and knowledge. It was kind of pushed to the side. So, this program, Growing Hope, is designed to go out and collect the seeds that are still remaining, talk with elders, get with the different seed libraries, just anywhere we can find [our Tribal] heritage food/seeds, and to grow those out so that they don't go extinct. And then to grow enough of them so that we can share them with the [Tribal] community. [The FRTEP agent] and his program have been providing technical expertise to this program. And without him, this program would not be as successful as it has been.
American Indian Cultural and Linguistic Preservation	Engaging Tribes in their traditions	From time to time, we tracked down a new type of heritage seed that we didn't have before, a new variety. And, sometimes we want to know if it's likely to cross pollinate with things that we already have, how far we need to plant them away to prevent that from happening, what season we need to do that planting for some of the threatened crops. Is it possible to plant them at just the right time that we can get two different harvests to double the amount of seed that we get? [The agent] always provided all of that information for us to help the program be successful. He has also worked with the entity [at another location] to grow out some of our threatened seeds. In some instances, we didn't have enough places to plant different varieties of corn so that they wouldn't cross pollinate. So, he helped us with that. He's also helped us with a couple of different areas and growing out the [traditional vegetable], the whole extension program has. [This traditional vegetable] is one of the most popular heritage cultivars in our program. So, [the agent] has grown that out: one, so that we can produce more seed; two, so that through the studies he's doing, we can better understand the optimal plant spacing. We can understand resistance to different insects to have the best crops possible. And then he's donated that fruit back to us so that we could cook it up for the community to try to expand community interest in that particular cultivar and in [Tribal] heritage crops, in general. The program has been very successful in drawing interest for these things. A lot of the community is already interested in heritage produce and [native] food, so it just takes a little spark and the program helps provide that.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement	Economic development	<p>[Interviewer] So the growers, are they...they're marketing the heirloom produce? They are to some extent. That is a part of the NIFA grant, that we have to work to set up a market for [Tribal] heritage produce within [the Tribal] Nation. A few of the growers are doing that. One of the growers is on the meeting today. He's definitely done it on the largest scale. We've got some other Tribal member growers who have been growing this produce and selling it at farmer's markets and things like that on a smaller scale. It's [for] local consumption. But broader level? Yes, absolutely. Heritage tourism is a part of it. [The Tribal] Nation is opening a cultural center here in a few months. Some of the permanent exhibits are about [Tribal] heritage produce. It's actually depicted in some of the diorama's, specific varieties that we grow out through this program.</p>
Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement	Economic development	<p>I've been farming produce for, oh 10 years now. And in 2019 started working with [FRTEP agents] on some variety trials on our farm, just to try to isolate certain varieties within different species that maybe perform best here in [the] county, in the [Tribal] Nation. And so, I should back up, I'm a commercial grower, we market in the local community farmer's market. And so, the program, we did it also last year, growing out some different... We did [a variety of vegetables]. So anyways, it's just looking at different varieties to see what would perform best here, commercially available varieties. The traditional [Tribal] varieties.</p>
Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement	Economic development	<p>[Working with FRTEP has] been a benefit that we could afford to grow... Rather than planting, say two or three different varieties of a particular crop, we could plant 10 varieties. And so, we just... As far as research and isolating those varieties that are going to perform the best, we get there quicker. And so, since then, since 2019, the last two years, then we've been able to... We've benefited in the sense that having identified those varieties that perform best here, then we could plant only those. And it's been a benefit also... I'm not involved in Extension or education, so it's more talking to people at farmer's markets and those type of events, and a lot of people that are gardeners, they get the garden bug from something like you see the Extension agents and the teachers working with these kids. And then they say, "Hey, Mom, Dad, there's a farmer's market over here. There's other people doing this." And while they're there, then there's conversation about what worked and what didn't, and because they've been involved, the youth, then they've got questions.</p>

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement	Economic development	So there, the families are really responding to that, wanting gardens. We've talked about doing a community garden. We can't really get it off the ground right now, but we're going to try to in the fall, have a garden, a big garden there at the school for the kids and some of the community members. So, it's really grown from just a little trough garden that we started [with the help of FRTEP] in the fall of 2020, and that we're excited about that. And I'm hoping we can work with the [Tribal] Nation and do some more things with them, for sure.
Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement	Economic development	A lot of the community are saying, y'all do a community garden and we're trying, but it just takes a lot of manpower and a lot of time. We hope that this time next year, we'll have a lot more things there. So then [the agent] has been out to our place and helped a lot. We appreciate he comes to [help with] our produce.
Indian Community Development Around Economic and Workforce Enhancement	Professional development	All my children were involved in 4-H growing up, loved it. And when I took the job at Extension and I asked her with her degree in horticulture, if she would be willing to help us out and to show the kids some different things, she was excited to help.
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	Adult involvement	A lot of people that are gardeners, they get the garden bug from something like you see the Extension agents and the teachers working with these kids. And then they say, "Hey, Mom, Dad, there's a farmer's market over here. There's other people doing this." And while they're there, then there's conversation about what worked and what didn't, and because they've been involved, the youth, then [the adults have] questions.
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	Adult involvement	Just in the past three years, we've grown close to 15,000 pounds of vegetables that we just give away to our Tribal seniors. And [the agent] has been a big impact in that on helping do different trials with different types of [vegetable].
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	Adult involvement	The FRTEP grant will provide the soil for the gardens and then we're going to ask the residents to provide the plants that they want. So, everybody has a little bit of skin in the game, and we're providing education and showing them how to do that. And we've been contacted about expanding into other counties and there's some interest now, from a lady I spoke with in my complex, she has another complex that she's over in [another] area. And then there's these senior housings, they're building those in every county. So, you can kind of use this in all of the counties in the [Tribal] Nation.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	Community involvement	The ultimate goal is to work with the community, to work with growers in the community, to work with cultural people so that we can use our own traditional agriculture, our own traditional foods, to fight diabetes and obesity, stroke, and heart disease, which affect our community at a higher rate than most other segments of the American population. So this program, it's funded in part by the [Tribal] Nation. It's also funded in part through a NIFA grant from the USDA. And [the agent] and his program have been providing technical expertise to this program. And without him, this program would not be as successful as it has been. From time to time, we tracked down a new type of heritage seed that we didn't have before, a new variety. And, sometimes we want to know if it's likely to cross pollinate with things that we already have, how far we need to plant them away to prevent that from happening, what season we need to do that planting for some of the threatened crops. Is it possible to plant them at just the right time that we can get two different harvests to double the amount of seed that we get? [The agent] always provided all of that information for us to help the program be successful.
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	Community involvement	What we're trying to do is be able to teach that back to not only our Tribal members, but community members by hosting classes and different events. With COVID, it has really shut us down with a bunch of stuff to host. So, we're really starting to try to kick back into to being able to offer those classes. But working with [the agent] has been amazing. He's taught me so much about growing the vegetables, the insects. Also [the agent and another individual] we're helping do a gardening class at the technology center in our County. And there's just a lot of things we have going on together.
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	Family involvement	So there, the [4-H] families are really responding to that, wanting gardens. We've talked about doing a community garden. We can't really get it off the ground right now, but we're going to try to in the fall, have a garden, a big garden there at the school for the kids and some of the community members. So, it's really grown from just a little trough garden that we started in the fall of 2020, and that we're excited about that. And I'm hoping we can work with the [Tribal] Nation and do some more things with them, for sure.
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	Healthy food choices	[The elementary school teacher] did stories that were about gardening and diabetes with the [Tribal] Nation and we had a whole program that I had gotten several years ago and all the books with it and the puppets. We talked about good

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
		choices of food and being able to make better choices when we eat and things.
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	Healthy food choices	I don't see that commercial grower interest, but you see families wanting to provide clean, safe food for their families.
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	School involvement	Our project is we have raised bed garden, and we have a cold frame structure that we start our plants in early. And in 2019 our program was great. It was our first year. We actually started our program with a science grant that we added a gardening aspect to. And that allowed us to buy a lot of equipment that we needed for that. And we actually produced a lot of produce for our school cafeteria. [The agent] has really been very helpful, keeping us going and getting us our... we call it dirt. He calls it growing media. So we've learned a lot.
Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction	School involvement	Well, we started in the fall of 2020, like some others did, and we had a trough garden and [the agent] came out and helped us and brought the plants and brought everything, free of charge, for us. Providing everything, which was great. And we planted, in late August early September, different kinds of vegetables in our trough that we'd be able to have before winter came and the kids just loved it. I mean they enjoyed it so much. And then we also went ahead and did a little road lot and, and some more vegetables in our classroom to go along with our outdoor trough gardening. The kids just learned so much from that. And the rest of the school watched us cause it was just the first grade class that did it. And they were very envious. They all wanted to participate. They all wanted to be part of it, but we gathered lettuce and carrots and bell peppers and all kinds of things from our garden. And then we talked about the nutrition value of those in the classroom. We also prepared the food and tasted it. We brought in different ways those vegetables were fixed, like for carrots, we talked about raw. And then we brought in cans of carrots and different ways to fix carrots and even the little ones, they just loved the different ways that you could fix something. Every week we'd do some kind of testing and some kind of a demonstration. And I learned real quick that you could get them to taste anything, if you put ranch dressing out for them, maybe dip it in or something, but we had a lot of fun with it. We watered every day. We watched it every day. When the

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
		<p>weather got bad, we built our own little hoop thing over it with the help of my husband and the Ag teacher. And we watched until the vegetables, we couldn't keep them alive any longer. So, the kids really got an idea from seed to the end of the life of the plants. And they enjoyed so much because trying all the different vegetables and all of these things that we did went along with our state standard sets expected to be taught in classrooms. And so, it went along with science objectives and social studies objectives. I felt like it was very beneficial for the classroom.</p>
<p>Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction</p>	<p>Traditional foods</p>	<p>Well, one thing that's exciting about traditional [Tribal] plants, is that typically, they are adapted to most of the [Tribal] Nation. Where with the commercial varieties of other vegetable crops, that we would be buying seed from, that seed could be coming from, Maine or Illinois. So, to have crops that have been grown here for hundreds of years, they're better adapted. And what I've noticed is from one year to the next, with the commercial varieties, one variety handles maybe a very wet season well another variety handles are drought season, where with the traditional crops, there's just seems to be more resilience in our area.</p>
<p>Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction</p>	<p>Youth involvement</p>	<p>So, we started off with the trough gardens, first. I think that [the agent] can confirm. I think that was a different grant that we got those troughs and started off with. And [two additional agents joined the effort] shortly after that. They started that deal. But I go in and worked with some second graders, I worked with some fourth graders, some sixth graders. And over time I figured out that I can have more impact with the second graders than I can those older kids. So, we would talk to them about growing their own food and all that kind of stuff and where you can grow it. And it doesn't take any room to do so. And I remember my very first one was second graders, and I'd got them a water can where they'd go out and water this trough. What we found out real fast, these second graders couldn't pick up this two-gallon can full of water. So, the teacher, which happened to be my daughter, wound up, they all had their own Styrofoam coffee cup. And they all had their own plant in this, trough, where they had a little label stick that had their name on it. That was their plant, even though they were all in the same trough. And they would go out every day with their little cup of water and water their plant in that trough. But the next objective to that deal was that I wanted them to eat this stuff. A lot of things that they would say they didn't like, a lot of things they'd never tried before, we wanted to grow those kinds of things. So, the plan was we'll</p>

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
		<p>grow that stuff and eat a salad, make a salad with everything we grew. And these kids all, "I don't like that. I don't like that". So, I learned that we had to do a little bribing to get them to do that. Most of these classrooms, I was also doing a chicken reality project. And they were always excited about hatching the eggs. So, I would kind of bribe them a little bit about, "Hey, you got to at least take one bite [of the salad], or we're not going to hatch any eggs in class." So, that worked pretty well. You got them all... Never had one that wouldn't try something new. And we'd have things like [vegetables]. That's something these kids had never eaten before. So mainly the two objectives to the project were to teach them that they can grow something in a smaller area, grow their own food and get them to try new things, new healthy foods.</p>
<p>Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction</p>	<p>Youth involvement</p>	<p>Our whole entire 4H group wanted to get involved in gardening. So, we began looking for ways that we could get our, we have 50 plus members in 4H. And so, we went in the spring and partnered with our vocational agriculture program there on campus. And they had worked with the [Tribal] Nation and had one of the hoop houses filled. The [Tribal members] came in and built it, free for the Ag department. So, the Ag instructor has worked weekly with our 4-H program, and we have planted all kinds of things. We have things growing in the hoop house. Then we provided individual, I guess you would call them a container gardening, with each of the kids, we planted them at school. Now a lot of those kids have taken all those plants home and they've either got patio gardens or some of them have put them in their real garden at home. But I know last week, one of the parents was putting pictures of [vegetable] plants that their three kids had brought home and how excited they were as a family to have these on the patio.</p>
<p>Indigenous Food Systems for Food Security, Food Safety and Obesity Reduction</p>	<p>Youth involvement</p>	<p>Well, I've been around a while. I started here when I was a senior in high school in 1991. And so been around vegetables most all of that time. I actually pastor a church now that's my job. [Extension] is just part-time for me. But what I see in recent years, I see kids, like in my church, that their parents are posting on Facebook, pictures of those kids, growing things at home, [fruits]. And, some of the things that we've grown out here, I take them with me to the church. And after church on Sunday mornings, we get out there on the back of a flatbed truck and we cut [fruit] and talk to those kids a little bit. What I see the interest now is not so much in young people with a commercial production, but with a home garden. They want to grow their own thing. They want to know that it's safe. It's a big</p>

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		deal now, for most people they want to just do it themselves. Somebody mentioned earlier with COVID, people are wanting to be a little more self-sufficient.
Tribal Youth and 4-H	Gardening and nutrition	[The eighth grade] girls got out there and got so excited about planting. And a lot of them had never planted a garden or anything before. And so, this was their first experience with really getting to grow something that they were going to eat. So, we tried to start out with early maturing cold season plants... where they could make a salad. And whenever they harvested, they have a big deal where they had all their salad, dressings and everything, but all the greens had come out of their garden. And they were really excited about that. And we've kept contact with that class. And they went ahead and used that knowledge and those girls have been really... It sparked something horticulture in that they hadn't really looked at before. And several of them went home and made little gardens at home.
Tribal Youth and 4-H	Gardening and nutrition	Because [the youth] have been involved [in an Extension-sponsored gardening program] ... they've got questions that maybe they're a little more apt to discuss, in a one-on-one than they are on a Zoom call, but they do talk and ask really intelligent questions as a result of having that experience and knowing what to ask and seeing the problems that arise, the unforeseen, dealing with nature.
Tribal Youth and 4-H	Tribal culture	We have a lot of [Tribal members] in our 4-H program. And I think we're probably 40%-50%. And we are in the [Tribal] Nation and we have a partnership with them in our Tribal 4-H mentoring program. We do a lot of things... we do a lot about the culture of the [Tribal] Nation. So anyway, it's been great.
Response to COVID	Adaptation of programs and services	And we showed them [students at the school] how to do the [gardening] tubs, like they were talking about where you didn't have to have a huge garden to be able to produce food for yourself. And so that was something new to them. And they were really excited about doing that. Of course, 2020 messed everything up. We moved a lot of the feed troughs to the to the... library. And a lot of the senior citizens helped take care of them since school wasn't in session. And so, the senior citizens got involved and they were really excited because they would come by and water and pick a few things. And so, it helped spark an interest in them. Not only in the kids, but it went generational. And so, this year we've done it on a smaller scale because school's been in and out.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
Response to COVID	Adaptation of programs and services	This year, because of COVID, we had to change our setup for distributing seeds to... Tribal growers. Before we went out to community events and it's pretty easy for somebody to come by and pick up seeds off of a table. But with COVID this year, we set up a process whereby interested growers print off this form that's in the Tribal newspaper... and then they mail that into us and we mail them the seeds. And this year before we ran out of seeds, we had 850 of those applications come in. So, that's pretty impressive community interest. And like I say, we ran out of seed. So, we couldn't even fill all the demand. So, we're expanding. We've got three gardens this year instead of two. And I'm hopeful [community partner] and his program will continue to help. But it's been a good partnership between [community partner], the Extension offices, and the [Tribal] Nation.
Response to COVID	Clarifying values because of COVID	What I see the interest now is not so much in young people with a commercial production, but with a home garden. They want to grow their own thing. They want to know that it's safe. It's a big deal now, for most people they want to just do it themselves. Somebody mentioned earlier with COVID people are wanting to be a little more self-sufficient.
Response to COVID	COVID adversely impacting program and service delivery	What we're trying to do is be able to teach that back to not only our Tribal members, but community members by hosting classes and different events. With COVID, it has really shut us down with a bunch of stuff to host. So, we're really starting to try to kick back into being able to offer those classes.

Image of Ripple Effects Map

