

# The Foothill Indian Education Alliance + CFHL, UCCE Central Sierra: Fostering Youth Cultural Knowledge in Food & Cooking

## SUMMARY

CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE (CFHL, UCCE) in collaboration with the Foothill Indian Education Alliance (FIEA), provided five weeks of garden-based nutrition education, cooking lessons, and integrated indigenous cultural art and history lessons to 17 local indigenous youth with varied tribal affiliations including Miwok, Maidu, Cherokee, and Apache through the summer of 2022. The goal of the summer program was to create an opportunity for indigenous youth to continue education-based learning and foster greater cultural connection. The activities provided youth with opportunities to build upon their cooking skills, garden knowledge, and experience recipes with culturally relevant ingredients. The success of this summer program will foster partnerships and programming with the local Native American communities to provide garden-based nutrition education and youth engagement opportunities.

## BACKGROUND

FIEA provides indigenous K-12 youth with after school tutoring and academic opportunities while fostering cultural enrichment in Amador and El Dorado Counties. During the 2021-2022 school year, FIEA provided K-12<sup>th</sup> grade after-school tutoring lessons.

Since 2016, CFHL, UCCE Central Sierra has partnered with FIEA to offer in-person, hands-on programs in nutrition, gardening, cooking, and most recently art and history. FIEA launched their first summer program in 2022 which featured CFHL, UCCE lessons including: 10 cooking, 10 nutrition and 2 gardening sessions with hands-on, experiential learning programs. This program was provided to 17 youth -10 elementary school students, and 7 middle school and high school students.

## SOLUTION

In March 2022, after FIEA had been closed to community support and services for 2 years, CFHL, UCCE was invited to begin a garden reinvigoration project that incorporated indigenous growing techniques with culturally relevant crops that enhance the space's biodiversity.

CFHL, UCCE coordinated the purchasing and implementation of soil amendments, seeds for summer and fall crops, and gardening tools, as well as donations of tomato and pepper plants by the Master Gardeners of El Dorado County.

FIEA's Garden Coordinator has Yaqui, Popago, and Navajo ancestral heritage. This cultural knowledge is coupled with a Masters in Science Education and work as a professional naturalist with many years of experience working with indigenous communities in the region. This led to a more comprehensive and fulfilling summer program. The success of the garden allowed for students to harvest and use the produce they had been growing in their cooking lessons.

Students expressed joy in learning more about their culture and how to cook culturally inspired recipes. Recipes from Leah's Pantries Young, Indigenous, and Healthy cookbook were used throughout the program. Some of the students' favorite recipes were the "Corn, Blueberry, & Wild Rice Salad," "Bison Wild Rice Burger," and "Chia of the Valley California Parfait" from CFHL CDSS Recipe Cards. Students reported cooking and sharing these recipes with their families.

*"As a result of my attending this program, I have developed a better awareness of the importance of a healthy, balanced diet."*

*-Hal Sherry, Head Tutor at Foothill Indian Education Alliance*

For more information or to get involved, contact Carmela Padilla, Program Supervisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension in the Central Sierra at [cmpadilla@ucanr.edu](mailto:cmpadilla@ucanr.edu)



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*Talia (6<sup>th</sup> grade), Lacey (4<sup>th</sup> grade), and Maurice (8<sup>th</sup> grade) students, holding Leah's Pantry Young, Indigenous, and Healthy cookbook.*

## OUTCOME

The 2022 FIEA summer program offered youth 10 sessions of series-based nutrition education, cooking, gardening, and cultural projects. The program started with 8 participants and grew to 17 K-12<sup>th</sup> grade participants by the end of the summer program. In addition, FIEA garden reinvigoration now produces pollinator crops and over 20 food crops that are regularly used or distributed to families at FIEA.

In FFY 23, CFHL, UCCE will continue to support garden work and offer series-based, garden-enhance nutrition education programming during the school year, as well as, introduce physical activity and youth engagement opportunities. The summer program introduced students to new tools that empower youth to make informed decisions about their health and physical environment.

For more information or to get involved, contact Carmela Padilla, Program Supervisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension in the Central Sierra at [cmpadilla@ucanr.edu](mailto:cmpadilla@ucanr.edu)