Mille Lacs Return to Wild Ricing

Three Ways to Calm Body and Soul: Bead, Write, Weave

Here Comes Esther Running Strong at Age 77!
A Return to Wild Ricing
Harvesting this traditional food is changing lives at the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Tribe.

Harvesting a Pint of Maple Syrup: Now, That's a Workout!
Guess how many calories a person burns harvesting maple sugar compared to doing office work! You will be shocked.

Calories are Burning Up at Mille Lacs
Circuit training builds muscle and burns calories. Try this workout by following step-by-step photos.

Three Steps to Calm: How to Go to Your Next Medical Appointment with Confidence
You can be calm and in control at your next medical appointment. Matt Kegg of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe gives tips on how he does it.

The Healing Power of Beading: A Class at the Colorado River Indian Tribes Teaches Much More than a Craft
Beading can not only relieve stress, it can build pride, self-confidence, self-love.

What Really Goes on at the Suquamish Tribe's Elder Weaving Class
Cedar weaving is a way to connect to community and tradition.

Esther Felipe: At 77 Years Old, She Walks Her Talk!
Acoma Pueblo elder is an inspiration to all.

Want to Lose Weight? Control Blood Sugar? Feel Better? It's as Simple as Dividing Your Plate
Take the confusion out of how much to eat with this easy method.

Matt Kegg (Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, right) stands with his caregiver, Floyd W. Painter III, on a dock on Mille Lacs Lake. Matt has had health challenges and has learned ways to feel better. (See story, page 14.)

Cover Photo:
Doug Sam (Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe) and Fawn Dewitt (Red Lake Band of Chippewa) are helping youth learn to harvest wild rice. (See story, page 5.)
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Sisters Madeline Bill and Rose Bill (Western Shoshone) know that commodity food can be healthy. (See story, page 40.)
For many people, just the sight of the concrete building would cause stress. When you go in, the staff is always busy. "There are many other people there with other types of cancer, and I feel like I’m the only Indian with my type of cancer. I feel like I’m a little left out, even though I’m the patient," says Matt.

Matt has learned to take steps to prepare himself to go into this large hospital. Here is what Matt does so he can go to his appointments calmly and with confidence:

1. **He switches off his emotions.**
   He tries to be in a logical frame of mind. "I leave emotional time for my family and friends," he says. He views his appointments as opportunities to gather information, get help, and be healthier.

2. **He tries to avoid self-talk that does not help him.**
   "I try to not make negative statements to myself, such as, ‘I don’t want to take insulin.’" He knows that there are medications and procedures that can help him, and he tries to stay focused on those.

3. **He brings questions for the health care provider.**
   "I’m not afraid to ask the doctor how a medication will help me, if there are side effects, or if there are other options." He believes that there are no stupid questions. His job as a patient is to ask questions.

   This logical, step-by-step way of dealing with cancer and high blood sugar has helped Matt. He is always learning how to be healthier. He does research on the Web, and reads books and magazines. And, he asks health care staff plenty of questions.

   "This isn’t so traumatic because I have information," he says. "The facts help me. They let me see that, in many ways, I can be in control.”
From the moment Fawn DeWitt (Red Lake Band of Chippewa) stepped into the canoe, time changed. Maybe everything changed. It was Fawn’s first time harvesting rice. With her in the canoe was Doug Sam (Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe) an elder who has been ricing since before he could walk. Fawn stepped into the canoe first. Doug got in next. The canoe rocked.

Fawn’s eyes widened, “Maybe I shouldn’t go,” she said. “Trust me,” said Doug.
Those two words were some of the few words Fawn remembers hearing during the four hours on Mallard Lake. She remembers other sounds, the canoe moving through the tall rice, the occasional wave bumping against the canoe, the flapping of the wings of the rice birds startled by the sight of humans.

Two other canoes were on the lake, but there was no speaking. Doug told Fawn that if there is a lot of talking, it creates wind.

Doug pulled the canoe through the water with a long pole. “When she knocked the rice, the boat rocked in a certain way, like the way it rocked when my grandmother knocked the rice,” remembers Doug. “The sign of a good ricer is when you can feel them knocking. I knew Fawn would be good at this.”

Fawn was getting a similar feeling. “It feels like a dream. It feels natural, like I’ve done it before.”

“You HAVE done this before,” said Doug.

Memories of rice go way back
Harvesting wild rice is an activity the Ojibwe people started doing long ago. “An Ojibwe elder had a vision to leave the East Coast and migrate west,” explains Doug. “He had a vision of food that grew in lakes.”
For centuries, the Ojibwe people regarded wild rice as a spiritual food. It was one of their main foods. “Wild rice is one of the foods the Creator gave us for survival. It is the best food you can eat. It has the right balance of carbohydrates, protein and iron. The Ojibwe used it like a vitamin pill.”

Doug’s earliest memories are of ricing on Mallard Lake with his grandparents. “The first thing they taught me was to put tobacco out for the Great Spirit,” he says. They taught him two more things: to preserve the rice by not picking it in the rain (when it breaks easily), and to not waste the rice, to pick up every kernel during harvesting, thrashing, cooking, and eating.

The first harvest of the fall is especially valued. Doug explains, “The first time you harvest it, you go out and feed the people who have lost loved ones.” He gently cups his hands, and offers the imaginary rice. Then he picks up a flat basket, and gathers a handful of rice, lifts it, and lets it sift through his fingers back to the basket.

“When I was young, we harvested rice every year....”

“Wild ricing is a process. You learn how to do hard work. You make an effort, and there is a reward.”

Ricing isn’t easy, but has rewards

Doug, Fawn, and a few other Mille Lacs Ojibwe members are standing in a traditional camp. It was built a few years ago, as a place to teach youth about rice preparation, and other traditional activities. Most youth have never harvested or prepared rice. Many young adults are like Fawn: They want to learn.

Having the camp and cultural leaders like Doug is bringing back the wild ricing tradition. Elders are finding that the picking, cleaning, parching, thrashing, and fanning is doing more than just teaching how to put wild rice on the table. “Last week, the youth came here and did some parching. There were two troubled girls. They processed the rice, forgot that they had problems, and became friends.”

The work is physically hard. While thrashing, you have to step and almost grind with your feet, moving continually until the husks separate from the rice. To be effective, you have to keep your legs moving, twisting your feet, using lots of motion with your hips. “You have to walk like a duck and thrash like a washing machine,” explains Doug. Five minutes hardly do anything. You have to move for an hour.
“Knowing our traditions gives me a sense of pride.”

Then there’s the fanning—holding the wide, flat basket, tossing up the rice, catching it, tossing it up again. Over and over. No stopping when you get bored. You stop when the rice has been fanned.

“Wild ricing is a process,” explains Doug. “You learn how to do hard work. You make an effort, and there is a reward.”

Ricing promotes good mental health

For the two teen girls, the reward was almost immediate. Anger left them, and they became friends. For some like Fawn, wild ricing brings a feeling of peace, purpose, and balance. For others, it brings much more.

Greg Davis is the coordinator of the tribe’s youth program. “If we don’t know this, don’t know about our heritage, we will lose our identity.” Many at the Mille Lacs Tribe say there has been much depression and hopelessness. Cultural leaders think learning about wild ricing, maple sugar harvesting, hunting, gathering, and weaving is the starting point to good mental health.

“We live in a white society, so it is like we are living on a teeter-totter,” explains Greg. “It gives us an identity crisis that could lead to inner turmoil.”

Greg has first-hand knowledge. He has suffered from depression and substance abuse. He says learning about his heritage helped him.

“These traditions and ceremonies give us a better understanding of who we are. When we know who we are, there’s joy,” says Greg.

Fawn agrees. “Knowing our traditions gives me a sense of pride. I have been searching and searching for this. I know I’ll be wild ricing every year.”

A key to identity

The leaders at the traditional camp know this: All wellness starts with knowing traditions, knowing who you are. For Fawn, Doug and Greg, wild ricing has been much more than learning the technique of pulling a canoe, or moving feet to thrash. Knowing about wild ricing and other traditions has been the key, the beginning to feeling better, feeling complete.

“Before you can be committed to physical health, you have to be committed to knowing who you are as a person,” says Greg.
Harvesting maple sugar was once a regular activity of the Ojibwe/Chippewa people. Eight hours of harvesting burns over 6,000 calories!

Harvesting a Pint of Maple Syrup
Now, That’s a Workout!

Ever wonder why it’s hard to keep weight off? Maybe the reason is that times have changed. We are not as active as our ancestors. We work nine-to-five jobs. We might walk from our car to the office, then sit in a chair most of the day. This is not what we used to do!

For example, listed on page 10 are the steps to harvesting maple syrup. It used to be a common activity of the Ojibwe/Chippewa people.

(continued on next page)
Look at what people did during some times of the year. Compare that to what you do today. Of course, we cannot do this same activity. But, we can walk every day. We can ride bikes with our children. We can garden. Any physical activity we do every day will help us be more like our ancestors.

Steps to Harvesting Maple Syrup

1. Make 100 spouts out of sumac.
2. Walk in a ½ mile area through the snow, find 100 trees, drill them and pound in spouts. Hang metal buckets on trees.
3. As sap drips into buckets, go back to camp and cut and split wood. Build and stock fire.
4. Walk back ½ mile through snow carrying two 5-gallon buckets. Go to each tree, pour sap into large buckets. Carry filled buckets back to camp.
5. Continue to cut and split wood to stock fire.
6. Repeat step #4, until a total of 30 gallons of sap have been harvested.
7. Continue to cut and split wood.
8. Cook sap down until one pint of maple syrup remains.

Total Hours to Harvest: 8
Total Calories Burned: 6400
(about 800 calories per hour)

Steps to Managing an Office

1. Walk from car to office.
2. Turn on computer, type, make phone calls.
3. Walk to another office, meet and talk with people.
4. Walk back to office.
5. Repeat step #2.
6. Walk back to car.

Total Hours in Office: 8
Total Calories Burned: 270
(about 30 calories per hour)

But don’t be discouraged! There are many things you can do to increase how many calories you burn each day. (And, you don’t have to chop wood!) By spending about an hour a day being more active, you can burn several hundred more calories.

Simple Things You Can Do to Burn More Calories

1. Park far from your office and walk.
2. Walk for 30 minutes during your lunch break.
3. After work, garden or clean house for 30 minutes.
4. Ride a bike or play basketball with your children for 30 minutes.

More Calories Burned: About 600
Plus Office Job Calories: 270
Total Calories Burned: 870
Calories are Burning Up at Mille Lacs

When Lisa Murphy goes to the fitness center at the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, she is on a mission. “I want to get the best workout in the least amount of time,” she explains. “I want to burn calories fast. Then I need to finish my lunch hour and get back to work.”

Jim Ingle, the fitness trainer for the tribe, helps tribal members learn a fitness routine that burns a lot of calories. “The idea is to keep your heart rate up. You do certain exercises, and keep going. You are burning calories and increasing muscle tone at the same time.”

Here are the steps to burning lots of calories in a short workout:

- Do 10 repetitions of each exercise four times and keep your heart rate up.
- Take the muscle to exhaustion.
- Move quickly to the next exercise with minimal rest.
- Complete the workout in 20-30 minutes to burn up to 600 calories!

Lisa Murphy (Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe) spent several sessions learning the routine with Jim. He helped her learn correct form, so she would not injure herself. Correct form also helps isolate muscles.

When Lisa does this workout, it takes her only 30 minutes, but she can burn up to 600 calories! A slower workout might burn only about half that number of calories. If you would like more information about calorie-burning workouts, ask your fitness program staff.
For chest and arms. Elbows slightly lower than shoulders. Forearms straight up.

Pull forward till cushions touch.

For back and arms. Back straight. Feet flat on floor.

Keep back straight. Pull till bar almost touches neck.

For chest and arms. Elbows at sides. Back straight. Feet flat on floor.

Push till arms are fully extended. Release slowly.
5a: For stomach. Keep arms parallel to floor and grasp handles.

5b: Slowly raise legs till knees are hip high.

6a: For legs. Keep back straight. Point feet and knees straight ahead.


7a: For back of upper arms. Keep arms close to body and hands straight out in front of elbows.

7b: Pull straight down till arms are fully extended. Slowly return to starting position.
Three Steps to Calm

How to Go to Your Next Medical Appointment with Confidence

Matt Kegg (Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe) has learned ways to have confidence when he goes to a hospital or clinic.

There’s a hospital in Minneapolis that isn’t so pretty. It’s huge and blocky and impersonal. Matt Kegg (Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe) describes it like this: “It’s an imposing structure.” Matt has been there many times to treat his cancer. Some medications he uses make his blood sugar go up. He goes to the clinic to get his blood sugar in control.
We are glad you’re reading *Health for Native Life*, a magazine to help American Indians and Alaska Natives prevent and manage diabetes. *Health for Native Life* is published by the Indian Health Service Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention (formerly the National Diabetes Program) in partnership with the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee and the Centers for Disease Control, National Diabetes Prevention Center.

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- Quit smoking
- Walks every day
- Splits wood
- Cuts back on sweets
- Controls blood sugar

Doug Sam (Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe) lost 30 pounds and got his blood sugar in control.

“I walk five to seven miles per day!” says Doug, pictured here with Fawn DeWitt (Red Lake Band of Chippewa).
imple Ways to Keep a Journal

You don’t have to start your journal with the words, “Dear Diary...” And, you don’t have to include your deepest, darkest secrets.

Keeping a journal can be about just writing down what you did. Matt Kegg knows this. He has been keeping a journal for a few years. He says it helps him keep medical appointments, and see the progress he is making to lose weight.

On one day, April 17, Matt wrote: “Clear. 50 degrees. Up at 7:00. Ate a bowl of cereal. 9:00 doctor’s appointment. Went to Wal-Mart. Dinner at Applebee’s. Ate half a sandwich.”

On another day during May of 2006, Matt noted that the Mille Lacs theater had its grand opening. Months earlier, Matt had written that it was being built. In some ways, the progress of the theater is like Matt’s life. If he writes it down in his journal, it becomes more like a journey. He can see the change. He can see the progress.

“It helps me see where I came from. It helps me see where I am going,” he says.

Tips to Starting a Journal:

1. Keep it simple. Use a plain notebook or a calendar.
2. Start with the facts. What did you do? Where did you go? Who did you see?
3. Add some feelings. Or, instead of writing the feelings down, draw a smiley face, or a stressed face.
4. Add more information, like blood sugar levels, or even what your goals are.
5. As the journal gets longer, go back and read where you were one week, one month, one year ago. Chances are, you have come a long way!

Matt uses a calendar for his daily journal. Every day, he writes down detailed notes.
At a diabetes support group at the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, four people talked about the small changes they have made to lose weight, be more active, and better control or prevent diabetes. They all say, "Small steps count!"

- **Nadine Wade (Red Lake):** Sits down with grandchildren at the dinner table. Discovered that if the family sits down at the table to eat, everyone eats less than if they eat in front of a TV.

- **Judy Falls-Feather (Bad River):** Quit eating French fries when she eats out. Switched from sugar pop to diet pop and water.

- **Linda Nickaboine (Mille Lacs):** Walks with children three times a week. Switched from fast-food hamburgers to home-made meals with fresh veggies.

- **Lloyd Keoke (Sissetou-Wahpetou):** Cut back on portion sizes, pop and unhealthy snacking. Set a goal to always be able to run after and catch his grandson, now age seven.
Pairs of moccasins are lined up on a table in a meeting room at the Parker Indian Health Service Hospital in Parker, Arizona. One look will tell you they are special. Feelings of love come out of the tiny leather pieces of art. They have names; the white buckskin pair adorned with pink, magenta and silver beads is “Strawberry Shortcake.” They will not be here for long. They will be given to loved ones, sons and daughters, grandbabies, nieces, nephews. With them will go the good feelings of their makers. The gifts will be given from the heart, with words of prayer and thanks. Thank you, Strawberry Shortcake. In creating you, my heart has felt a healing.

Every pair of moccasins represents hours of pulling thread through buckskin, lining up bead after bead, joining rows of beads with thread, then ripping them out when they are not perfect. The women, a few men, and youth who make these cannot help but experience personal change. They come into the class with self-doubt.

“I have learned that we are natural designers. We are good at doing beadwork. When I look at the other ladies, I see pride in their faces,” says Rebecca Martinez (Navajo) with Ella John (Navajo) at right.
“I have no patience. I am not crafty. I can’t do it.” Almost every single person says this. A few give up and leave the class. Others stay. And, several weeks later, Strawberry Shortcake appears, as if by magic.

**Beaders describe what happens in this class:**

**Ella John, Navajo**

“Before this class, I had never touched a bead in my life. My mother tried to get me to bead, but I thought, ‘Nah, it’s not my thing.’ But I wanted to try something new.

“Now, I’m on my second pair of moccasins. It’s easier than I thought. It’s more joyful. My family can’t believe I’m beading. They say, ‘You? Beading?’

“My grandson asks me about my beading, and it gives me a chance to tell him that his great-grandmother did beadwork.

“When I see my work, I feel real proud of myself. I actually finished it! I didn’t think I could do it. Last Tuesday, I finished a pair, and I couldn’t wait to show my grandson. He said, ‘Cool, Grandma!’

“And to think I wasn’t going to start beading because I didn’t think I had patience. I guess there was some patience in there!”
Gayle Pratt, Arapaho

“I come from a traditional background. My cousins do a lot of beadwork. But this class was my first time. I never knew my grandparents, and my mother didn’t bead.

“From the start, it was so simple. I thought, ‘Why didn’t anyone teach me sooner? Why did I wait so long to learn?’

“I liked beading right away. You come to this class, and you forget about everything. So far, beading is the only activity that gets my mind off of my troubles.

“Sometimes I think about beading as a habit. They say you can’t get rid of a bad habit, but you can replace it with something good. This is my therapy. This is how I deal with stress. I bead it. I tear it out. I bead it again, and tear it out until I am comfortable with it. When I leave the class, I have accomplished something. I think about that for days, about my accomplishments.”

Sarah LeDeau-Schmasow, Rocky Boy, Beading Teacher

“Beading gives us much more than a relief from stress, an escape from our day-to-day troubles. Learning to bead grows into a sense of pride, into feeling the fullness of being a proud Indian person. It’s like the act of beading resurrects a part of us that has gone to sleep.

“When we bead, we are put on common ground with the other people who are beading. There is no instructor at the front of the class pointing to a white board. We share the same desire to be happy, to laugh, to not be downtrodden. We are all teachers and have something to say. There is energy in the room. Together, we bring forth the power of healing. It’s as if each person has been drawn here for a specific reason, a divine reason.

“This beading class is like a breeding ground for healing.
"We all know the routine. We fix ourselves a plate of food. We eat. We gather our beading materials. Then, slowly, we talk. We talk about anything and everything. We talk about what it means to be Indian today. We talk about breast cancer, diabetes, Native American history, boarding school.

"Each person came in here saying, 'I can't.' And look! We are proving our own theory of ourselves wrong!

We are changing how we think of ourselves, as bead, as mothers, as women, and community members. These little moccasins are much more than proof that we know how to bead. They are proof that we have experienced a healing. Not a painful healing, but a joyful healing.

"Beading shows us that we are smart, talented people. We have nothing to be ashamed of. We are proud. Through beading, we know this."

"Beading is so much more than stress relief. Beading resurrects a part of us that has gone to sleep. It helps us feel the fullness of being a proud Indian person," says Sarah LeDeau-Schmasow (Rocky Boy), pictured bottom left.
Rose Lewis, Jill Howard, Geraldine (Girlie) Joe, Betty Hamlin, Ivy Cheyney, and Carrie Rock show the cedar art they made in the Elder Weaving Class.
What Really Goes on at the Suquamish Tribe's

Elder Weaving Class

For over seven years, elders at the Suquamish Tribe in Washington State have been meeting once a week to learn to weave. But, like most art-learning gatherings, the elder weaving class has evolved to teach much more than how to make a basket.

Elders say they look forward to the class as a time to laugh, get rid of stress, get some exercise, tell stories, and yes, make a clam basket.

The class started with bringing in a few experts on coastal weaving: Suquamish Master Weaver Ed Carrier and Theresa Parker, Master Weaver from the neighboring Makah Tribe.
“Weaving is a skill that was almost lost.”

**Weaving at last!**

Most of the Suquamish elders had never made a basket. “My mom made a lot of clam baskets,” says Rose Lewis. “She wanted to teach me, but I didn’t have the patience.”

Many elders have similar stories of not learning the art of weaving when they were younger. Now, they know the value of the skill. They are thrilled that they have learned something that almost vanished. “Weaving is a skill that was almost lost,” says Ivy Cheyney.

Some elders have been weaving for years. Others have recently joined the class. All cannot imagine what they did or how they felt before the weaving class. “When you weave, you don’t have time to worry. Weaving is a great stress relief. You can’t believe what good therapy it is!” says Ivy.

“We have so much fun here. We laugh and tell stories.”

One of the stories was about clam baskets. Ivy told of how a Makah elder used to make the baskets, put seagull eggs in them, and give them away for Easter. “They were these huge eggs, with big, bright, orange yolks,” she says. “I ate every one of them.”

Now, there are more than just stories about clam baskets. The special baskets are being made again! These Suquamish elders know how to harvest the cedar boughs, and strip them of their greens and bark to get to the delicate stems. These are dried, then woven into the hardy baskets.

“[Betty Hamlin](https://example.com) shows a Suquamish style basket necklace she made.
Baskets and more

But that’s not all these elders can make. Rose lifts up three cedar baskets, displays them on the table. Sue Henry shyly presents hair barrettes, while the other woman oooh and ahhh. “Suzy! These are gorgeous!”

And Girlie Joe stands up to model a magnificent cedar vest with a matching hat. “This took a whole day of pounding the cedar, and I can’t remember how many days weaving,” says Girlie.

“That’s nothing,” says Ivy. “Once it took Girlie three hours to get one stitch right!”

Patience. The exercise of gathering and pounding. The stress relief of concentrating on the work of one’s hands. The medicine of laughter. The peace of knowing the weaving tradition lives on. The Suquamish elders find it all at their Wednesday night weaving class.

Elders say the act of weaving has a goal much greater than making a basket. (These started baskets are by Rose Lewis.)

“This took a whole day of pounding the cedar, and I can’t remember how many days weaving.”

Jill Howard (Suquamish) likes to go to the basketmaking class because she gets to spend time with her aunt, Rose Lewis (Tulalip).
Esther Felipe:
At 77 Years Old, She Walks Her Talk!

Story and Photos by Cheryl Dickinson
Twenty years ago, Esther Felipe’s 10-year-old grandson asked, “Grandma, can you help us raise some money?”

“Yes, I guess so,” Esther replied, not knowing how such a simple question would change her life. Esther (Acoma Pueblo) was 57 years old, and didn’t know that her grandson wanted her to run a race with him to raise money. Esther had never run a race.

But she wanted to support her grandson and felt like three miles was something she could do. So, Esther ran the three-mile race and helped raise money for her grandson’s school. “I didn’t really run the whole three miles. I walked at the end,” she says modestly.

That first race inspired Esther. She started walking and running to get in shape. She started entering 5K, then 10K races. Now, at age 77, Esther runs in half marathons, races of about thirteen miles!

Esther races to stay healthy and to encourage others to stay in shape. She has three daughters, 21 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren. Her grandson still runs with her sometimes. “One of my daughters used to run…until I started beating her!” she says with a quick laugh.

She encourages other seniors to be active. She knows it helps a person feel better, and helps them be able to get around more easily. “I hope I’m a good role model,” she says. Her motto is, “Get active! Stay active!”

A typical Esther race: eight miles of hot, dusty trail

Boy, does Esther walk her talk! At the Acoma Pueblo Sky City Seed Run, Esther is wearing a blue runner’s outfit and a big smile. Other runners are nervous, but Esther seems calm, maybe because she has done it many times before.

This race is eight miles long. The course takes runners across the dusty desert, up a steep trail onto sacred ground, then back on a dirt road. About 100 people are entered. Esther is standing near the starting line, chatting with friends and family members. Some runners are looking at the first place prizes: beautiful, hand-painted pots made by an Acoma artist.

“I don’t know if I’ll win a pot today. But, I don’t race for the prizes anymore,” says Esther. She says she has a houseful of trophies and
plagues from placing in over 150 races!

When the starting gun goes off, Esther runs easily. She has trained for this race. She is in shape and confident. There are three other women entered in her division (age 60 and older). Esther forgets about winning or losing, and runs her best race. At the end, she is not the winner in her age division, but says, “I’m happy to finish the race. I’m training for my next half-marathon, and that’s what’s important today.”

**Esther runs back**

But Esther isn’t finished running! She catches her breath and jogs back down the race course. She meets her niece, Shirley Laughlin, who is running slowly, but is very determined to finish. Esther runs the last hundred yards with her niece. She lets her niece cross the finish line in front of her, and applauds along with the crowd.

“I’m so proud of her,” Esther says. “She was just diagnosed with diabetes.” Esther encouraged her niece to start being more active, to help her manage her diabetes. “She’s done a 5K race and now today’s race.”

**How it all started**

After the race, Esther reminisces. “When we were young,” Esther says, her eyes squinting under her sun visor, looking far away, back into her youth. “We had to carry water. We were active all day long. There were eight of us children. All girls!”

She smiles, but then becomes serious. “We worked hard,” she says. “We worked in the fields. We would get up at four or five in the morning, and walk to the fields. We would water and weed and hoe. And then we would walk to school!”

Esther continues, “After school, we would work some more in the fields. We raised corn, beans and wheat.”

“I was never overweight,” Esther recalls, saying it was due to hard work, and eating simple, home-grown foods. Esther is glad she can still be a positive role model for youth through seniors.

Though she’s tired now, after the race she proudly shows off her plaque, and then sits, quietly, under the shade of a tree. She gazes off at the rippling heat shimmering on the desert horizon. “To be running at my age...” she begins. “...If you keep yourself strong and healthy, then, yes...at 77, you, too, can still do it...” She pauses, and considers her own future. “I have many more races to do before I retire.”

Esther is glad she can still be a positive role model for youth through seniors.

At age 77, Esther is proud to be a fit role model for other seniors.
Justin Miller (Acoma) is 18 years old and took first place in his division in the 2007 Acoma Pueblo Sky City Seed Run. He won a beautiful Acoma pot. But, like most Acoma runners, winning the prize is not the main reason he runs. “I was always running after my older brother,” he says. “I was always an active kid. I wanna go outside. I had all this place to run around,” he sweeps his arm at the sky, the vast desert, the distant mesas, and smiles. “My family has a history of running. In Acoma, there’s a history of runners.” And with his award in hand, Justin is proud to be one, too. “This race was a challenge for me,” he says. “I want to run a half-marathon and a marathon. I eventually want to work up to the Iron Man Triathlon.”

Tara Elkins ran track with Justin in high school. She says she runs to stay in shape, and is hoping to start seriously training for the Chicago Marathon, located near where she will be attending school in Michigan. She runs for fun as well as to stay in shape. “It’s a physical fitness thing,” she explains.

Tonja Galindo (Acoma) is also 18 and has been running since she was 15. “My friend went out for cross country, and asked me to join in because it was lots of fun.” Tonja is with her grandparents today and gratefully gulped down the bottled water they offered as she crossed the finish line. Their smiles and support are obviously important to Tonja. They are happy for her too, and you can see the pride glowing in their eyes. “I like to run,” says Tonja. “I like the feeling.” And then, with a shy smile, she goes on, “I like to be competitive.” Tonja knows that racing requires her to take good care of her health. “I eat pasta before a race. I like oranges and bananas. I gave up Cheetos and Coke, to prepare myself better.” Tonja also trained for the race by running 30 minutes a day. She knows that staying healthy is good for her now and for her future. She says it gives her something positive to do and keeps her away from trouble.
Myron Salvador (Acoma Pueblo) is the coach for the Acoma Running Club, a group of youth ages five to 16 who love to run. “The kids compete in 1, 2, 3, and 5K races.”

In 2007, 45 individuals and four teams competed in the Region X Cross Country meet held in Salt Lake City, Utah. Twelve youth advanced to the USATF Cross Country Nationals held in Lawrence, Kansas. “When we started this running club, we only had 20-25 runners competing at all the meets. Last year, we had 64 runners in the program. We’ve had an excellent turnout.”

It is obvious that these youth have running in their blood. “We’re runners. That’s who we are.”

Schultz knows.

Taking a daily walk is a top priority.

The dachshund leads the way on his daily walk with owner Carrie Rock (Suquamish) and Earlene Abler (Suquamish).
Esther Felipe (Acoma Pueblo) does not have diabetes. She is fit and trim. She controls her weight and avoids diabetes by running and by watching what she eats. “I try to eat right. I drink 2 percent milk. If I eat cheese, it’s low-fat or non-fat. I eat a lot of vegetables. And, I eat beans! I love beans!”

Esther’s diet of lots of vegetables and beans gives her plenty of vitamins and fiber.

There are things Esther tries to avoid. “I don’t eat white bread, and I don’t eat a lot of pasta. And, I don’t eat things like hot dogs often. The only time I’ll eat a hot dog is at an event or at someone’s house.”

Esther is able to manage her weight because she has some general healthy rules that she uses every day.

For people trying to lose weight or control blood sugar, having a few guidelines can help. Avoid high-fat foods. Try eating more vegetables, less bread, and fewer sweets.

Another easy way to lose weight and control blood sugar is to use the “plate method.” Using the plate method will help you eat smaller portions. It will help you eat the right kinds of food.

Try the plate method. It’s simple. About one-fourth of the food on your plate should be protein: meat, chicken or fish. About one-fourth should be a starch: potato, bread, pasta or corn. And, about a half should be green, yellow, orange or red vegetables.
How a Buckaroo* Fights Diabetes

With AA, With the Horse Spirit...
In the cold of Nevada winters,
a buckaroo learns to get tough. Ronnie Dixon
(Elko Band of Western Shoshone) has been a
buckaroo his entire life. "If I had a slight broken
bone, it wasn't worth a trip to the doctor."
This is how Ronnie felt before he found out he had diabetes. He quickly realized diabetes is a disease that is tougher than a broken bone. It’s a disease tougher than a Nevada snowstorm, tougher than an ornery colt. “Diabetes beat me up,” says Ronnie.

But look at Ronnie today. He lopes a colt in a round pen at the base of the Ruby Mountains. Over and over, round and round. It’s freezing cold and spitting snow. Ronnie is warm and content.

On this snowy day, he’s taking a break from his job as an adolescent drug court counselor. His life is full of taking care of horses and taking care of troubled teens. Diabetes may have beaten Ronnie up for a time. But Ronnie did that “buckaroo up” thing. He got angry, got tough, got responsible. When Ronnie found out he had diabetes, he returned to the things he learned in AA. He returned to what he has learned from the spirit of horses. He returned to the round pen, to the sacred circle.

Diabetes is tough

Buckaroos tend to downplay everything. Ronnie says a colt is “rough.” That means the colt bucks and spins and is a bit psycho. Ronnie says his life has been “kind of tough.” He has lived in a tent and in a converted chicken coop. He has broken his arm, his collarbone, his pelvis, his back, and most of his ribs, and been shot in the abdomen. Even so, Ronnie says finding out he had diabetes was one of the most difficult things he has ever encountered. That’s how hard it is to have diabetes.

Using what he learned from AA

About two years ago, Ronnie noticed he was losing weight and felt tired. Then one day he was riding colts and his vision became blurry. He went to the clinic and said, “I think I have diabetes.” He was right.

From that moment, Ronnie started dealing with diabetes using tools he had gotten from AA. First, he dealt with his feelings of anger. “I was angry at myself because I had lost control of my body. But from what I learned in AA, I knew anger was related to denial. I knew I had to accept I had the disease of diabetes.” This was hard, and took many months. But slowly, his anger and denial changed to acceptance.

Then, Ronnie started to learn as much as he could about diabetes and how to manage it. He asked the doctors and nurses questions. He listened to their answers. “I told myself whatever the health staff told me to do, I would do it.”
He kept his medical appointments. He cut back on sugary and fatty foods. He tested his blood sugar three times each day. He took his diabetes pills as directed.

He became more active. "It wasn't like I was going to start jogging," he says. "I kept doing what I had always liked to do, but just started doing more of it." Ronnie rode horses more often, and for longer periods of time, and did his horse chores more quickly.

"Once I checked my blood sugar then went for a ride. I rode a lot of miles, did a lot of turning. Then, I got off the horse and checked my blood sugar. It had dropped 20 points."

Another thing Ronnie learned in AA and recovery circles was to take care of his emotions. He told family and friends he had diabetes. He accepted their concern and help. "I put myself into the care of people who knew me. I talked to my children. I talked to a friend who is also a counselor who understands the spiritual journey of recovery. They gave me support."

**Leaning on his horses**

To help his spirit, Ronnie again turned to his horses. When he felt down about diabetes, he would often go for a ride.

Over and over, round and round. It's freezing cold and spitting snow. Ronnie is warm and content.

Riding his horses gave Ronnie time to think. He realized he could control his diabetes.
One day, the sky was covered in gray clouds. As he trotted in a circle, the sun came out, and lit up the snow-covered mountains. Ronnie noticed his cattle dog “Biscuit” running laps on the outside of the pen. He saw a mouse peak its head out of a hole to check out the commotion. Ronnie sat still on his horse, and looked up at the glistening snow. “I understood the movement of life. It was like a blessing.”

Ronnie says just the sight of his horses calms him down. “They are magnificent. I am amazed by their beauty and strength. I am in awe of their loyalty and spirit.” Sometimes he sits on a barrel in the middle of the pen and just watches.

Riding his horses gets his mind off problems and makes stress vanish. Sometimes, he makes patterns in new-fallen snow: an angel or his brand DX. Or, he just rides round and round in the pen. “When I’m in the circle, it’s like a high. It’s like being an eagle.”

*What the sacred circle teaches*

Horses have taught Ronnie many lessons. Like AA, they taught him to let go of anger, to control what you can, and let go of the rest.

The round pen has taught him much as well. Whenever he rides in it, he is reminded of the sacred circle.

“I see the round pen as a metaphor for life’s journey. When you end a ride in the round pen, you return to where you started. It’s like life. When our life is finished on Mother Earth, we return to our Creator, to our families, to our loved ones.”

Ronnie says the round pen and the sacred circle help him on his diabetes journey. “When you are in the circle, there is no place to hide. So, you just keep moving. Then you’re not stuck. Then you’re not stressed. When you have diabetes or any problem, if you are in a sacred circle, you can relax because you are safe.”

*A buckaroo is a specialized cowboy who lives in the region of Nevada and surrounding states. A buckaroo does only horse and cattle work, little mending of fences, nor feeding livestock. A buckaroo’s belief is, “If it cannot be done on horseback, it cannot be done.”*
What Ronnie says about horses

• “Riding a horse is like everyday life. Every time you saddle up, you deal with big issues like fear, respect, control.”

• “When there are pressures in my life, I just tell myself that I have a saddle and bedroll, so I’ll be okay.”

• “The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man. The horse is my savior.”

• “I once had a dream I was surrounded by hundreds of horses of all colors, and they were the ones I was going to ride, and it was all happiness.”

What Ronnie says about diabetes

• “After the anger, there was relief because I realized I could work to become healthy with diabetes.”

• “Diabetes fit into my recovery program. I learned to be disciplined and take care of myself.”

• “You can learn to control diabetes. Not just through changing your eating habits, but by changing your attitude and lifestyle.”

“Am I happy? Not every day, but usually.”
There came a time in my life when I became sick with diabetes.  
I felt so weak and stood among my horses  
As they moved around the corral.  
I listened to their sounds and heard soft whinnies.  
They seemed to look at me with eyes soft and kind.  
I felt the healing of the horse spirit, healing waters over barren land.  
I prayed to grandfather and rode my horses.  
In the mountains an eagle circled!  
The Horse Spirit stays within my soul, I ride a healing circle!

Ronnie's poem and photo were featured on a poster presented to the Senate and the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., to stress the need for continued funding of the IHS DDTP Special Diabetes Program for Indians.
Think all buckaroos are meat-and-potatoes men? Ronnie Dixon (Elko Band of Western Shoshone) used to eat a lot of meat and potatoes. In fact, he ate just about anything he wanted. After he found out he had diabetes, he changed his eating habits. He lost weight and his hemoglobin A1c fell below 6 percent! Check out what this buckaroo’s diet looks like:

- Small portions of meat and potatoes
- Lots of high-fiber beans (sometimes three portions a day)
- Very little sugar or sweets (cut out baked goods and candy)
- No pop (drinks water or coffee instead)
- Very few high-fat foods (avoids foods that have 10 percent or more fat per portion)
There is excitement in the air. The Bill sisters, Madeline and Rose, have entered the building!

They sit down at a round table in the Wellness Center of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone in Elko, Nevada. They are friendly, open, talkative. But mainly, they are excited! On this cool fall day, they are giving advice about health.

When you sit down at the table to talk, you quickly realize the sisters are special people. Madeline and Rose know what they are talking about. They have done their research. They know a lot about how to stay healthy. What they know is not only correct, but it is easy to do, and it works! How did Madeline and Rose get to know so much about good health? Read on:
Why is it important to stay healthy?

**Rose:** I have diabetes, so eating right and exercising helps control my blood sugar.

**Madeline:** I don’t have diabetes, and I don’t want to get it.

What’s the best way to stay healthy?

**Rose:** Control what you eat, and how much you eat. And, if you do just one thing, cut out sugar. Our dad was a rancher. I remember he warned us about sugar. He said, “It’s not good for you.” I rarely eat anything that has sugar in it.

**Madeline:** I rarely eat sweets or fried foods. I don’t drink pop. If I get hungry for potato chips, I eat a handful, then stop.

There are a lot of foods we should not eat, but what are some foods we should eat?

**Madeline:** I eat food out of my own garden, lots of fresh vegetables. I buy low-fat meat, beef and chicken that are raised without hormones.

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**Tips to Avoid “Commod Bod”**

Sisters Madeline and Rose use commodity foods. Here are hints to help you shop for commodity foods and eat healthy.

- Choose fresh meat, fruit and vegetables, whenever they are available.
- Choose unsweetened applesauce.
- Read labels before you decide. Choose items that have the lowest fat, salt and/or sugar.
- Rinse canned meats, veggies and fruits to remove the fat, salt and/or sugar.

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Madeline Bill and Rose Bill know that they can shop for healthy foods on commodity foods day.
Cecelia, Madeline and Rose have two other sisters. Only Madeline does not have diabetes. All are trying to eat more healthy foods. "I check my blood sugar every day. I listen to music, and I laugh to get rid of stress," says Cecelia Bill.

What if you eat a lot of commodity foods? Can those be healthy?

**Rose:** We eat commodity food, too. It’s our goal to not get “commod bod!” I rinse all canned veggies and meats to get the salt and fat off. I also limit how much pasta I eat. If I have noodles, I only cook one half cup, which is one portion. I don’t eat a plateful of noodles.

**Madeline:** I drain the syrup off canned fruit. I choose unsweetened apple sauce. And, I read the labels. If the canned food is high in sugar or salt, I either don’t choose it, or I rinse it off before eating it.

What about commodity cheese? Do you eat that?

**Madeline:** I have a tip for how to eat commodity cheese. Cut just a small piece of it, roll it in lettuce, or put it on a slice of apple and eat it! That way, you get the taste of cheese, but you also get some vegetable and fruit, too.

**Rose:** We eat commodity food, too. It’s our goal to not get "commod bod!" I rinse all canned veggies and meats to get the salt and fat off. I also limit how much pasta I eat. If I have noodles, I only cook one half cup, which is one portion. I don’t eat a plateful of noodles.

**Madeline:** I have a tip for how to eat commodity cheese. Cut just a small piece of it, roll it in lettuce, or put it on a slice of apple and eat it! That way, you get the taste of cheese, but you also get some vegetable and fruit, too.

Do you exercise?

**Madeline:** I walk every day for 30 minutes. I work in the yard. In the winter, I shovel snow.

**Rose:** I walk.

What else do you do for your health, besides eating right and walking?

**Madeline:** A few months ago, I had a lot of stress in my life. To get rid of it, I kept talking to my friends and family members. A good friend came over to my house, performed a ceremony, and cleansed it with smoke. It was very healing. My house has a clean feeling, a stress-free feeling. I also keep eating right and walking. These things help stress go away.

**Rose:** I get stressed about finances. When this happens, I bead. It soothes my mind.
How do you know so much about health?

Madeline: I pay attention to my body. I am interested in staying healthy. So, I read everything I can about how to stay healthy.

Rose: I go to the library and check out books about health and nutrition. The more I read, the more curious I become. I can't stop reading!

In a nutshell, how does a person get healthy and stay healthy?


Madeline: Go to the library. Check out books about health and nutrition. Read, read, read.

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**Rose's Grocery List**

There are a million things you can choose to eat. What should you choose to stay healthy? Rose has read a lot about good nutrition. She knows some foods have lots of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Some foods help your body avoid cancer, diabetes, and other diseases. Rose calls these "power foods." They are packed with good things, and don't have empty calories. Rose tries to eat some of these every day.

When Rose goes to the grocery store, she tries to buy some of these "power foods:"

- **Almonds** lower cholesterol and help your heart to be healthy.
- **Apples** reduce the risk of stroke and heart attack by lowering cholesterol. Help prevent cancer.
- **Blueberries** slow down the aging process. Help memory and coordination.
- **Broccoli** helps protect against breast cancer.
- **Carrots** are high in fiber and help prevent colon cancer.
- **Chicken (skinless breast)** provides many nutrients that help the immune system and protein that maintains muscle.
- **Green tea** helps prevent cancer, heart disease, and high cholesterol.
- **Oatmeal** is high in fiber that helps control blood sugar and prevent heart disease and cancer.
- **Olive oil** helps prevent heart disease.
- **Oranges** help prevent colon cancer, heart disease, and inflammation.
- **Whole wheat bread** is high in fiber that helps prevent colon cancer, breast cancer, and diabetes.
- **Yogurt (low-fat or non-fat plain)** contains calcium that increases bone strength.
Julia Davis-Wheeler (Nez Perce) was a member of the National Indian Health Board when Congress appropriated money through the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 for diabetes treatment and prevention in American Indian and Alaska Native populations. The amount of money was unprecedented: $150 million for five years ($30 million each year).

At the 1997 NIHB Consumer Conference held in Spokane, Washington, a special meeting was hosted for tribal leaders to discuss and recommend the first steps in determining the distribution of these special funds...

Meet

Julia Davis-Wheeler

Remembering Early Days of the TLDC

Julia remembers that meeting in Spokane, and the subsequent discussions like they happened yesterday. Not only was the amount of money huge, the need for the money was huge. "It was so emotional. It was like getting a great big Christmas present," she says.

According to the legislation, the special diabetes money was to go through Indian Health Service and be distributed through a grants process. In November of 1997, the IHS Director convened a small diabetes workgroup to review and recommend options identified from the Area consultations. This workgroup became the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee (TLDC) and continues to make recommendations and provide advice on policy and legislative issues related to diabetes.

Julia was a member of the TLDC during their initial meetings. "I remember the IHS staff coming to the TLDC meetings and giving reports on amputations, dialysis, blindness, and death rates. These meetings were intense. There were a lot of tears," says Julia.

Members of the TLDC were not just reacting to the numbers. Like Julia, all members had experienced diabetes first hand. "I have diabetes on both sides of my family. We’ve lost several family members from complications," she says.

Fueled by an intense determination to help her people and all Native people, Julia traveled to the TLDC quarterly meetings and listened to the reports of IHS, other diabetes-related agencies, and tribal leaders. The TLDC continued discussions on how to distribute the diabetes funding and how tribes would access the funding.

Each meeting started with prayer. Each meeting saw TLDC members give
testimony on how diabetes was devastating families and communities. Even though the ideas on how best to spend the money may have been different, the desire to stop the diabetes epidemic was the same.

That was ten years ago. Since then, Julia has worked to help build two clinics at the Nez Perce Tribe. She has witnessed walking programs, nutrition programs, and wellness centers flourish at the Nez Perce and other tribes. “It feels really good to see the fruits of our labor.”

Julia has experienced personal change as well. For two years, she was not voted onto the tribal council, so did not serve on the TLDC. She held a variety of jobs at the Nez Perce Tribe. She was a My Care Team Assistant, implementing an Internet program to improve patient/provider communication. She also transported patients to a dialysis center.

“These two years were eye opening for me. I witnessed the everyday struggle. I realized that many people are living day-to-day. They worry about what they will eat for their next meal, how they will pay their electric bills, how they will afford to drive to see a specialist. I started to understand and live the people’s hardships.”

Julia says these jobs and being in touch with people were very satisfying. But, she was being repeatedly asked to run for the tribal council. In May of 2006, she ran and was elected for a three-year term. She is a strong advocate for diabetes health education and prevention. Diabetes prevention is high on her list.

Julia is again a part of the TLDC, this time as an Alternate for the IHS Portland Area Health Board Member Linda Holt (Suquamish). She says her two years working for the Nez Perce Clinic changed her. “I’m much more people oriented. I want to make things better for every patient.”

And how do we do that? “We as tribal leaders need to push the budget process to keep the SDPI funding intact. We need to go back to the basics, traditional foods, traditional beliefs. We need to know who we are, and express ourselves, through singing, dancing, artwork, beadwork. Let’s not get so busy that we forget the things that are most important: our heritage, our culture.”
Indian Health Service Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SPDI) provides grants and technical assistance to tribes, urban sites and Indian Health Service clinics for programs that prevent and manage diabetes.

Learn more about these programs in *Health/Talk/Circle*. 

Diabetes prevention and management programs are growing. They aren’t just about exercising and eating right. Diabetes prevention and management can mean learning about traditions. It can mean being inspired by a fellow community member. However people take care of themselves, physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually is a way to prevent or manage diabetes.

**Dance Away Diabetes**

The Dance Away Diabetes Program at the Yakama Nation teaches powwow dancing to anyone willing to learn. In 2005, the class started with 20 participants from throughout the reservation. There were 52 participants in 2006 and 2007.

Rex M. Quaempts, MD and the Yakama Healthy Heart Program Director, started the program with a $500 grant from the American Indian Physicians’ Association to pay for the room rental. In 2007, an SDPI grant provide money to purchase a new boom box and music CDs for the classes.

A former competitive dancer, Rocco Clark, Sr. teaches the weekly two-hour dance class. While participants do warm-up stretches, Rocco tells them it’s important to keep their bodies strong by staying active and eating healthy foods. Participants dance to build leg stamina, and increase endurance.

Contributions of fruit, vegetables, water, and juices are brought to the class. This provides healthy snacks during the break and supports healthier food choices.

During the last half hour, Rocco gives instruction about the rules of powwow dancing, the etiquette of special dances and about respecting family, elders, tradition, and drummers. Rocco, says, “Powwow dancing helps Native people not be ashamed of who they are anymore.”

For more information, contact Robin John at 509.865.2102 x310 or robin.john@ihs.gov.

Toppenish, Washington
At the Western Shoshone commodity foods day in the small town of Wells, Nevada, people weren’t that interested in turkey chili. Then they smelled it simmering on the stove. Then they saw Ervin Bobb take a bite. They tried it. They wanted the recipe.

A video about how to make healthy blueberry muffins was playing. “Hey, those muffins would be good with elderberries,” said one person.

“It’s about that time of year,” said another.

As the commodity food orders were boxed up, moms, dads and kids tried the exercise equipment. By the time the commodity boxes were ready, everyone had received a sample of exercise, healthy food, and good company.

Ervin Bobb (Western Shoshone) had been cutting wood and was hungry. The turkey chili was a perfect way to fill him up.

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**THREE-BEAN TURKEY CHILI**

1 lb. extra lean ground turkey  
1 medium onion, chopped  
1 garlic clove, minced  
1 cup zucchini, shredded  
1 can (28 oz.) diced tomatoes, undrained, no added salt  
1 can (15 oz.) garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained  
1 can (15 oz.) kidney beans, rinsed and drained  
1 can (15 oz.) black beans, rinsed and drained  
1 can (8 oz.) tomato sauce, no added salt  
1/2 cup mild green chili, diced  
2 cups water  
1 to 2 tbsp. chili powder  
1 to 2 tsp. cumin

2. Add remaining ingredients to Crockpot and mix well. Cover. Cook on high for 6-8 hours. Makes eight 1-cup servings.

Calories: 239  
Protein: 23 g  
Fiber: 10 g  
Carbohydrate: 34 g  
Fat: 2 g
“My family is definitely my highest priority.”

Arielle Cawston (Colville) would rather stay home with her mother Colleen, father Rodney, and brother Tyrone than hang out with friends. Even though they live in urban Olympia, Washington, they retain Native values. “We wanted to raise them in our culture, no matter where we are,” says Colleen.