Embracing Culture Within Physical Activity

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Our home, the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indian reservation, is located in Bowier, Wisconsin. Originally our People came from the east, an area now known as New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts. The tribe currently has around 1400 members, about half live on or near the reservation.

The Diabetes Prevention Team is part of the Community Health Department at the Stockbridge-Munsee Health and Wellness Center. We provide healthy lifestyle education to all ages in the community through a variety of events.

The Diabetes Prevention Team consists of:
- Community Outreach Director
- Diabetes Nurse Educator
- Registered Dietitian
- Community Health Representatives

SNOWSHOEING SERIES

In 2018 our Community Health Department was able to purchase snowshoes for use by our community and at events. We were able to host one event before our snow went away for the season.

In 2019 we implemented a snowshoeing series starting in January and running through March. It was held weekly on Thursdays for an hour. We have a trail system located behind our health center and this is where the hikes were held. Staff broke the trails each week for participants and two trails were available to hike.

Our first option was approximately a ½ mile featuring wooded and rolling terrain and our second option was just over 1 mile featuring wooded rolling hills and a board walk system. Tribal staff and community members were welcome to partake. Participants were welcome to bring their own snowshoes or use ours free of charge.

The program was successful with an average of 13 participants at each weekly hike. We were lucky to have a long and snowy winter to enjoy the outdoors. We had over 100 people attend the 2019 series. We also offered a fleece jacket to participants who attended at least 5 out of our 10 events. We had many weekly returners and were able to offer a traditional winter physical activity for our community to enjoy.

We also hosted an evening snowshoe hike in March to reach other populations of the community that potentially could not make our lunch hour series. We had a great turn out with over 40 participants in attendance. We created a wooded hike lit by luminaries along the path. All ages were welcome to attend. Participants also enjoyed a fire outside and a soup supper.

"There is no man-made medicine that can heal the soul like the medicine of our Creator, our natural world around us." – Angelia Irving

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY EVENTS

Along with our cultural physical activity events we host a myriad of other events to keep people active throughout the year. Our goal is to help people reach their 150 minutes of physical activity goals throughout the week. Some of these events include:
- Annual Volleyball Tournament: featuring 20 teams in 2019
- Yoga Classes
- Summer Walks
- Lake Day: featuring yard games, kayaking and canoeing
- Powwow 5K Run/Walk: Timed run with walk option, reaching 100 participants in 2018
- Annual Diabetes Walk: September walk held at our Powwow grounds to promote diabetes awareness
- Fall Color Walk: held at our golf course to enjoy the beauty of nature in fall
- Turkey Trot: walkers are entered to win a turkey for their Thanksgiving meal
- Jingle Bell Walk: held indoors at our Family Center, walkers wear jingle bells and walk to holiday music
- Poker Fitness: allows participants to try various forms of exercise to earn the best poker hand

We offer activities during the lunch hour, after work hours, and on some weekends to reach as many participants as possible.

LACROSSE

The Community Health Department was able to obtain a grant that allowed us to purchase lacrosse sticks and balls. In May of 2018, Community Health Representative Warren Miller initiated a weekly lacrosse series that ran through August.

The lacrosse series started out with a cultural lesson by Misty Cook on the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe’s history of the game. Misty’s knowledge was passed down to her through generations of family members playing lacrosse. Misty explained how the lacrosse sticks were made and she had some on hand to show participants that were passed down to her from her father.

The lacrosse series took place in the Many Trails Park, which is also where the annual powwow is held. The field in the Many Trails park has lent itself to many community gatherings and physical activity events throughout the tributes history in Shawano County. The Red River that flows through the park provides a place to cool down after a game of lacrosse in the hot summer sun.

The weekly series averaged around 30 participants, with as many as 45 one week. Participants ranged in age from 4 to nearly 60 years old. Lacrosse was so well-received that partway through the summer participants requested to play more often, so the group began playing two or even three nights a week. Healthy snacks and drinks were available each week.

After the snowshoeing series ended, community members patiently waited for the snow to melt so that lacrosse could begin. The 2019 series started in April and the group is looking to take their skills on the road this summer by playing against other tribes.

"I was fortunate to be able to participate in 5 of the snowshoe series. I looked forward each week to the experience of being able to take a break outdoors, with fresh air and beautiful scenery! I felt rejuvenated and had more energy after the walks and felt a sense of accomplishment as well. I am grateful to the team for providing this valuable activity to the community. This is a great activity to balance mind, body, and spirit!" – Joanne Torres

"Lacrosse is a game from our culture that is not only a very physical game, but also great for us mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It is also extremely fun!" – Misty Cook