

Food Dignity Project begins third year on Wind River Reservation

by [Ernie Over](#) on [May 30, 2013](#)



The Food Dignity Project group listened to Tim Thomas of Fort Washakie as he talked about his and Kathleen's garden expansion this season. (Photo by BMA)

(Fort Washakie, Wyo.) – The beginning of the third year of the Food Dignity Project drew representatives from New York, Wyoming and California to Laramie this past week, including representatives from the Wind River Indian Reservation.

Food Dignity is a five-year collaborative research initiative to trace the paths forged in five communities to build sustainable local food systems, according to Jim Sutter at Blue Mountain Associates (BMA) of Fort Washakie. The program is administered by BMA, an organization helping to meet the health and human services needs of the rural and urban communities of Indian Country, according to its web site.

In a news release, Sutter said the leadership and staff of BMA participated in a weeklong meeting that concluded May 25. The meeting included a two-day leadership development workshop and a three-day business meeting in Laramie plus a two-day tour of the Wind River Reservation. The meetings were also attended by BMA's peer community partners

from the Whole Community Project in Thompsons County, New York; East New York Farms, in Brooklyn, New York; Feeding Laramie Valley in Laramie, Wyo.; and Dig Deep Farms & Produce in Oakland, Calif. Researchers from the University of Wyoming, Cornell University, and the Center for Popular Research Education & Policy also participated.

Mini-grants for small-scale food-based businesses are one component of the project, Sutter said. In the past two years, BMA has administered 19 mini-grants. The 22 conference participants visited two successful mini-grant recipients when visiting the Wind River Reservation: the Brown Hen Family Farm and the garden of Kathleen and Ken Thomas.

Both the Thomas and Brown Hen family farms are second year grantees for Food Dignity. In addition to the mini-grants, BMA's involvement in Food Dignity led to the creation of the Wind River Tribal Farmer's Markets, which are held Thursdays from mid-July through September in Fort Washakie, Ethete, and Arapahoe. The farmers markets expand access to fresh, locally grown food for the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone people and provide business opportunities for local food producers on the reservation.

BMA also oversees a USDA Specialty Crop Grant and helps to administer, along with Eastern Shoshone Tribal Health, Growing Resilience, a pilot study of the effects of home gardens on health.



Janice Dorothy talked with some of the Food Dignity partners about the Brown Hen Family Farm on last week's tour of the Wind River Reservation. (Photo by BMA)

For more information about BMA, please call (307) 349-4321 or see: <http://www.bluemountainassociates.com/>

For more information about the Food Dignity Project, please see: <http://www.fooddignity.org/>