



Project to create culturally relevant food system in Warm Springs

By KYLE SPURR The Bulletin
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Warm Springs
(Bulletin file photo)

A new project is researching ways to make food production more culturally relevant and accessible to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

Carina Miller, an economic research analyst with the Warm Springs Community Action Team, a nonprofit that supports the Warm Springs economy, will spend the next two years establishing a food system that honors tribal traditions and supports the local economy.

“There’s a huge potential to not only support the development of tribal farmers and gardens but also to start putting our foods into areas where they are more accessible to people here,” Miller said.

“This project is really going to be an education about what food systems are and community input about what this community wants and then pursuing that.”

The two-year effort is being funded through a \$177,942 grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust, a Portland-based foundation that supports equitable projects in Oregon.

The High Desert Food and Farm Alliance partnered with the Warm Springs Community Action Team to secure the grant.

Chantel Welch, program director at the food and farm alliance, said the collaboration was a good chance to address food access and security in Warm Springs. Welch said she is excited to see what Miller develops over the next two years.

“I think it’s such a great opportunity,” Welch said. “We truly believe everyone

deserves good food and that means different things to different communities.”

Miller, who has previously researched economic challenges facing the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, said she will rely on the community’s input.

In one survey, tribal community members said they would like a local butcher who can prepare meat that is hunted in a traditional way on their land.

Miller said having a butcher is an example of making food directly accessible to the community.

“We can have our traditional kinds of foods here and keep our money here,” she said.

Another aspect of Miller’s plan is to honor traditional hunting by supporting how the deer and elk hides are made and sold, she said.

“That’s an example of a traditional need being met by an modern day economic development incentive,” Miller said.

Miller plans to partner with several Central Oregon farms to share resources and encourage Warm Springs farmers to grow more produce.

“We want to open up these channels for produce to be coming from the reservation,” Miller said. “For actual food systems to be created here.”

As Miller starts her two-year project, she will build off of other projects being done in Warm Springs. Specifically, the Warm Springs Community Action Team is in the process of renovating an old building into a space for small businesses and a food-cart pod.

Miller is already imagining ways to connect the carts in the pod with locally sourced food.

“These things have already started forming,” Miller said. “We just want to build up that capacity within the tribal community.”

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