

Partner Spotlight



Kemāmacegtaq

This month we are highlighting the work of the Menominee Early Childhood Services program.

This includes Head Start and Early Head Start. Early Childhood Services values community, environment, and Indigenous knowledge. Their goal is to become known as a place of health through policies that reflect both center and community values.

Early Childhood Services approved their Food, Beverage, and Healthier Work Environment Policy for After Center Activities in June of 2021. They worked on their policy through the Food Service Guidelines Strategy of the CDC HOP Grant. They have been the key partner for the Farm to Early Childhood Education strategy of the second round of funding for the CDC HOP Grant.

Early Childhood Services have taken many positive steps highlighted in their policy. They obtain water bottles for children, healthy vending options for

staff, infused water dispensers, a salad bar for use at parent-teacher conferences and family nights, and healthy food experiences in the classroom. Cooks from the center attended an all-day event with Ho-Chunk Chef Elena Terry to learn how to incorporate Menominee foods into their menus. They have embraced the Menominee Harvest of the Moon materials: hanging posters, utilizing coloring books, and incorporating recipes into the menu for the center. They continue to explore lists of Indigenous producers as a possible source of traditional foods. All kitchen staff and teachers participated in the Indian Health Services Food Safety training. Early Childhood Services continues to distribute and champion a healthy weights program out of Montana State University, titled Turtle Island Tales. This program offers a place to share the ingredients for a healthy family, including inspiring stories, recipes, games, and parenting help for Native families with young children.



Early Childhood Services have also been instrumental in the Farm to ECE strategy of the CDC HOP grant. They have started planting a container garden in the spring with the children to be harvested in the fall. They have participated in several field trips to educate children about where their food comes from. They planted sunflower seeds in the community garden and toured the Farmer's Market located on the College of Menominee Nation campus. They harvested those sunflowers in the early fall and were able to explore how the seeds look and feel. Staff have participated in training in incorporating these ideas into their classrooms. They have other projects in the works, including a field trip to the CMN Aquaponics facility, in-class aquaponics projects to be harvested for Mother's Day, binders that will have curricula, songs, poems, and book lists for their use, and Farm to ECE totes that have materials that can be used in helping kids explore food, gardening, and farming.