ABSTRACT

TITLE:	The Reintroduction of Cultural Concepts Into Din Gardening Workshops: The Effect It May Have on Levels of Interest and Participation on the Navajo Reservation.
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ABSTRACT: The Navajo Reservation was established on July 25, 1868 when the United States Congress ratified a treaty with the Navajo people. This ended the cycle of violence that had plagued the Din for centuries. Now the Din would have a chance to prosper in this new era of peace, but it would be short-lived and bittersweet. This paper will explore how the Navajo acquired agriculture, how it changed their culture, and many of the possible reasons the Navajos lost connection with it through archival research. It also examines post-modern efforts to revitalize interest in agriculture on the Navajo Nation (NN), such as the Yego Gardening! Program (YGP). Issues of food security, food sovereignty, and access to healthy food on the Navajo Nation will also be addressed. The Navajo people have gone through a unique transition in the American Southwest when they entered the region around 1300 A.D. in hunter-gather nomadic bands. The Din adopted the agricultural practices of the Puebloan people who already resided in the region but retained their transhumance way of life. When the Spanish introduced livestock into the area, sheep in particular, this new living capital fit right into the Navajos semi-nomadic way of life. The Din had adapted to the precarious environment that constantly threatens the people trying to make a way of life here. Without a written language much of the traditional knowledge that made survival for the Navajos possible has been preserved through oral history and recently the language has been translated and formed into a written language. This has allowed the preservation of traditional knowledge and culture, which would have otherwise been lost. Equipped with this knowledge and expertise in modern agriculture methods researchers can access ways of reintroducing agriculture, through sustainable methods, back to the Navajo people. The Navajo tribe is in need of healthy food alternatives and sustainable economic practices, sustainable organic agriculture could be that vessel. The Din people suffer from higher than the national average rates of type 2 diabetes and obesity. This is due to living in an isolated part of the United States and the average Navajo living below the poverty line as well as living in a food desert. Most of these problems could be combated with a return to simple gardening practices.