**“Planting the Past in the Future”**

“Planting the Past in the Future” was the theme of the 2019 IAC Western Native Youth Food Sovereignty Summit. After months of planning, the event came to fruition in October and was hosted by the Yavapai Apache Nation (YAN) in Camp Verde, Arizona.

We had over a dozen youth attending representing various tribes within the region. Youth were up and ready to go very early for the first day’s activity with the YAN traditional stick game, a very lively, competitive game which turned out to be a big hit. The IAC Youth Leadership Development Team led team building exercises with the youth. The Tribe provided great resources from their tribal departments; the YAN Wilderness Program, Diabetes Program, the Agriculture Department and the Utilities Department. Some of the hands-on learning focused on preparing YAN traditional foods such as grinding mesquite beans into flour using traditional grinding stones, preparing prickly pear fruit into juice and syrup. The young people had fun preparing breakfast the next day turning the mesquite flour into pancakes with the prickly pear syrup on top. Youth also learned how to process Yucca plants into fiber cordage and were taught how to make bracelets, rings and necklaces and also the history of the plant and its importance to tribes in the region.

The youth learned how to test and filter water with water filtering kits. They also learned the cause and effects of pollution in our water. Youth were exposed to conservation planning and learned about USDA programs that would help in their future agriculture endeavors. Another big hit was the field trip on an evening hike on one of the hiking trails in Sedona, Arizona. Sedona was designated a “Dark Sky Community”, meaning it’s exceptional for star gazing. We all laid down on a giant flat rock outcrop and had 5 minutes of silence just to reflect and gaze at the night sky. Then each said one word out loud of what came to mind; “thankful, Creator, humble, infinite, small, UFO”, were some words. It was certainly memorable for all.

The youth felt they would return home with knowing they have a significant role to play in Indian Country Food and Agriculture and felt better prepared to make an impact in Indian Agriculture. Most indicated that they’re likely to get involved in their local agriculture and are more aware of conservation planning at home. The event took the youth full circle, planting the past in the future. Thank you to the Yavapai Apache Nation for supporting our native youth and for hosting a wonderful event.

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IAC Western Region