



## 2012 Wind River **AGRICULTURE SUMMIT:** Strengthening agriculture by addressing barriers, analyzing risks and adding value

### **Situation:**

Meetings over the past 16 months with the Wind River Agricultural Resources Committee identified that the group needed further education and guidance to develop into a strong working group to influence positive change on the Wind River Indian Reservation (WRIR). The concept of the WRIR agricultural summit arose from these meetings. The agricultural summit was designed to encourage agricultural producers and small-acreage landowners to strengthen agriculture on the WRIR by addressing barriers, analyzing risks, and adding value to their operations. The

group identified prominent leaders in Indian Country who they believed could help teach them how best to proceed. Several Indian Country experts and a variety of University of Wyoming and local instructors carried out the two-day event. Nine federal, state, and local agencies also had promotional booths throughout the conference. The summit was primarily funded by pass-through dollars from the USDA Risk Management Agency: Education and Outreach Partnerships Program grant. The National Agriculture Statistics Service was also a large funding supporter.

The 2012 Wind River Agriculture Summit: Strengthening Agriculture by Addressing Barriers, Analyzing Risks, and Adding Value was September 20-21 on the Wind River Indian Reservation. The Thursday evening session was a planning meeting for the further development of the Wind River Agricultural Resources Committee that was facilitated by the Northern Cheyenne Grazing Board from Lame Deer, Montana. They shared insights and suggestions with the Wind River Group on how to best influence tribal policy. Thirty-five people attended this meeting.

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Seventy people participated in the all-day Friday conference. It was the first time WRIR agricultural producers and small-acreage owners were given the opportunity to learn about strengthening agriculture on the reservation at a local, educational event designed specifically for them. Conference attendees went away with a better understanding of Indian land tenure issues, land appraisal, and a variety of production agriculture topics.

**Impacts:**

During the two-day summit, 105 WRIR residents participated in high-quality educational programs related to strengthening agriculture by addressing barriers, analyzing risks, and adding value. Ten educational hours associated with agricultural ventures and risk management were offered. End-of-session surveys showed that 100 percent of participants who returned evaluations plan to use the information they learned. Furthermore, 100 percent also said the conference met their expectations and, for the most

part, answered the questions they had set out to have answered.

As a result of the Thursday planning meeting, the Wind River Agricultural Resources Committee plans to become more organized within the next year. It intends to develop operating procedures, bylaws, and appoint a working board to direct the group's actions. These steps will hopefully allow them to become fully recognized by the Joint Tribal Council, helping them influence positive changes related to agriculture on the reservation.

Evaluation comments from Friday conference attendees were very positive. When asked to give examples of how the information learned would be used, one producer wrote he would be better at managing tribally owned land. Others learned how tribal land can oftentimes be inappropriately appraised, and they now plan to get at least two appraisals before making any management decisions on their land. Even people who do not directly work in

agriculture found the land appraisal seminar beneficial. One conference participant wrote, "I am a housing counselor and can better explain the topics in homebuyer classes."

Another key take-home message was the importance of Indian landowners writing a will. One attendee learned that, in order for "transition to the next generation to take place, wills need to be done." Another was surprised to discover that a will is not required if a person's grandchildren are not enrolled members of a specific tribe, as laid out in the American Indian Probate Act. This person shared that they plan "to go home and educate other tribal members about this" act. Several programs were offered on livestock recordkeeping, and a number of producers stated they would do more recordkeeping and better planning after learning specific management strategies at the conference.



**Justina Russell**  
University Extension Educator  
Wind River Indian Reservation  
(307) 332-2135  
jtoth1@uwyo.edu