

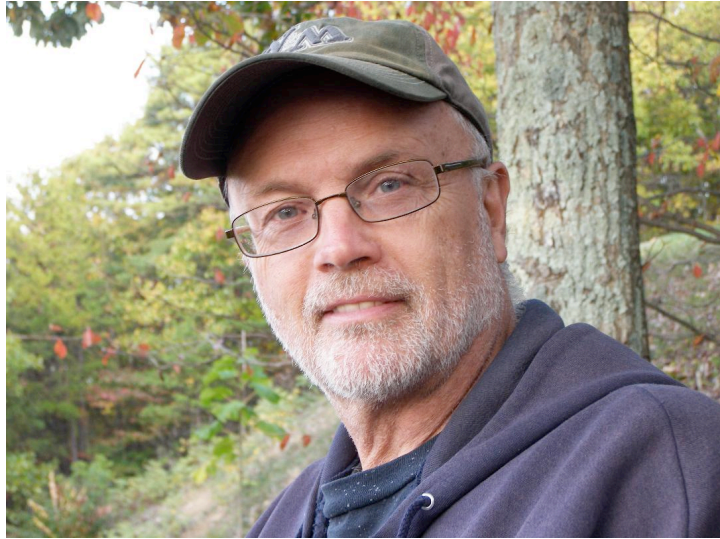
# Native American Food Sovereignty

By Richard C. Cook

A Presentation for the  
2<sup>nd</sup> Annual “Attack on Food and Farmers” Symposium  
Sept 6-7, 2024

“How to Fix Our Broken Food System”

Let me introduce myself. My name is Richard C. Cook.



I was born in Missoula, Montana. My mom grew up on a self-sufficient homestead at Seeley Lake, MT. She had Native American ancestry. Later we moved east, where she worked for 25 years as an interpreter for Colonial Williamsburg, and I spent 32 years as an analyst for the Federal government. My dad was a chemist for Dow Chemical.



<https://www.amazon.com/Our-Country-Then-Richard-Cook/dp/1949762858>

# Native American Genocide

In 1492, there were at least 13 million Native Americans living in North America. By 1900 the number of full-blooded “Indians” in the United States was estimated at about 185,000.

The leading cause of death was white man’s diseases brought from Europe. The most prevalent was smallpox.

But loss of habitat and the collapse of the indigenous food supply was a major contributor to high mortality.

Native American societies can be divided into two major categories by food source: hunter-gatherers to the north and agriculturalists to the south (farming and grazing), often with considerable overlap. Ceremonial life still reflects this distinction.

Under the reservation system, the Indians were initially supposed to be supplied with staples, including grains, meat, salt, coffee, and sugar. They were also supposed to be allocated farming equipment, wagons, seeds, and livestock.

Often reservation land was unsuited to agriculture and to hunting, and the allocation of provisions was notoriously inadequate and corrupt.

Treatment of the Indians by whites fully qualifies as a genocide—*among the worst in known history.*

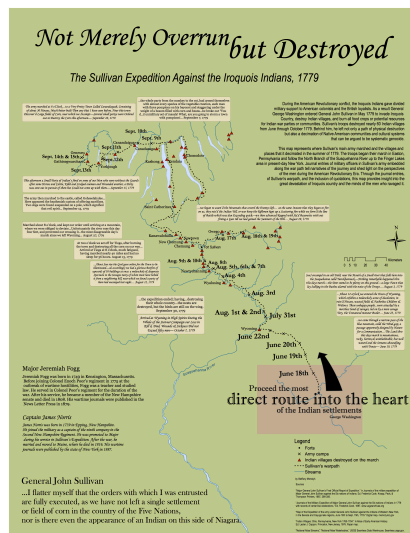
# Spiritual Elements of Food Culture

- Food is sacred; gives life to the people
- Palpable bond with Earth, Sky, and Spiritual Beings, including marking of the annual progression of seasons
- They also saw plants and animals as spiritual beings; e.g., totem animals
- Celebrated food as means of healing, including herbal medicine
- Food culture defined male and female prowess, roles, and responsibilities
- Determined physical culture of tools, implements, and weapons
- Created occasions for community celebrations and religious events, such as thanksgiving feasts, giveaways, etc.
- Determined migratory routes of people and animals, and town and village locations
- ***Loss of control over the food supply means cultural and societal death***

# The Americans Focused on Destroying the Native Americans' Food Supply



1779 Sullivan Expedition focused on destruction of Iroquois orchards and crops. The Iroquois never recovered.



As a result, the Native Americans gave General George Washington the name of "Town Destroyer"



Slaughter of the Buffalo—1870s

# Native American Food Resources Today



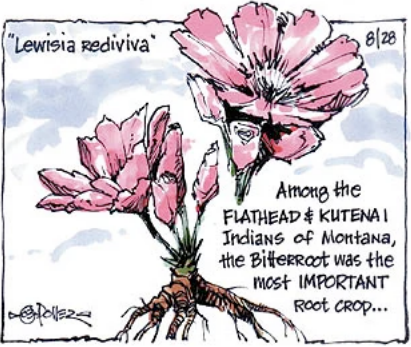
Polson, MT, Walmart Supercenter



But, things are changing. Native Americans are not waiting around for our globalist/corporate masters to give them a break. Native Americans are also **fully aware** of the threats to the larger societal food supply (“pandemics”, “supply chains”, “inflation”, etc.)

To understand this, we need to focus, so we’ll be looking at the Flathead tribes of Northwest Montana.

# Abundance of Indigenous Food Sources in the Montana Rockies



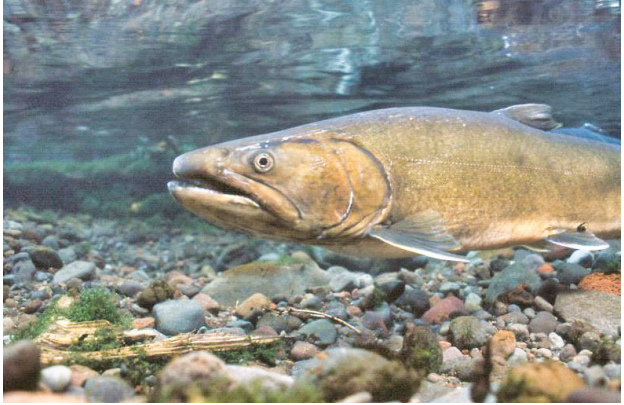
Bitterroot



Camas Bulb



Pacific Salmon



Bull Trout



Thimbleberry



Mountain Grouse



Mule Deer



Elk



And the annual buffalo hunt....



A rich natural culture, imbued with beauty....



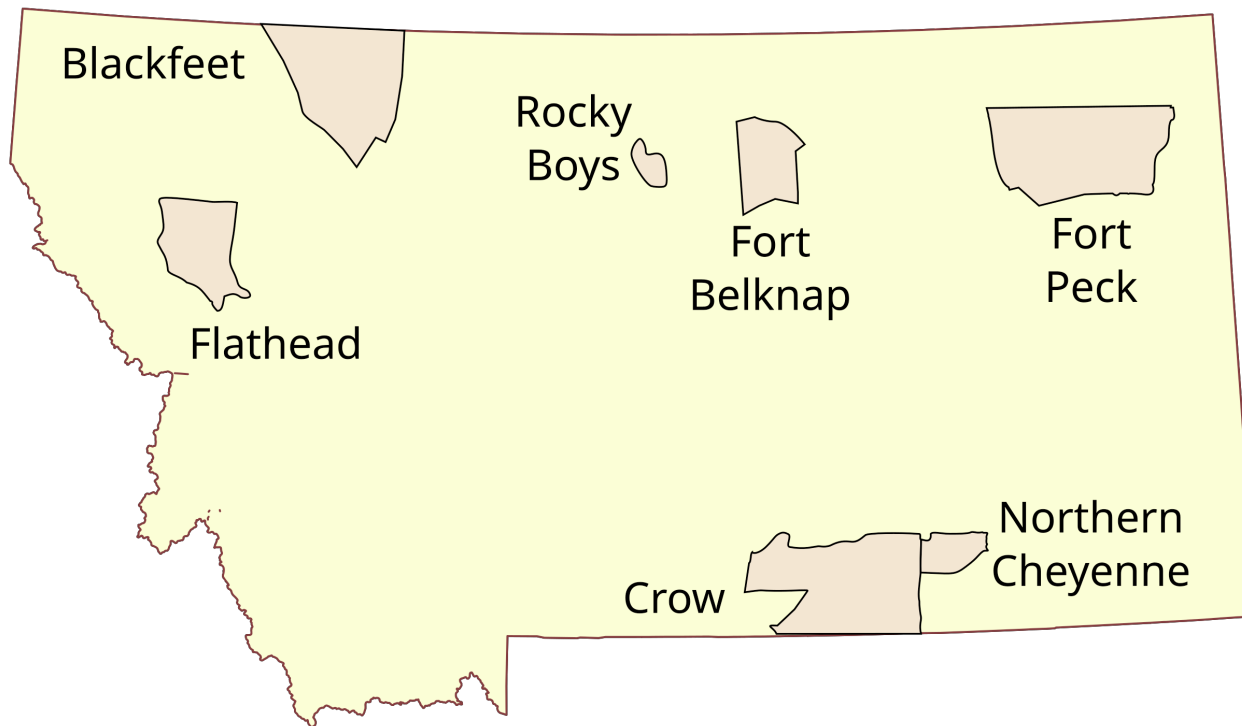


*Entering*

**FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION**

**SÉLIŠ, QĪSPÉ, AND KSANKA TRIBES**

**SQÉLIX<sup>W</sup> / AQĪSMAKNIĪ**



Flathead Indians of Montana -- 1927



THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES  
OF THE  
FLATHEAD NATION



Land Status 2012

- Tribal
  - Individual Trust
  - Fee
  - State
  - Federal
  - Water
- County
  - Township
  - County Boundary
  - Township Boundary
  - Reservation Boundary



2012 TRIBES  
TO STATE, FEDERAL, AND OTHER  
LAND OWNERSHIP

CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES  
OF THE FLATHEAD NATION

2012 TRIBES  
TO STATE, FEDERAL, AND OTHER  
LAND OWNERSHIP

# Flathead Tribes Today

- The Flathead Indian Reservation is home to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes. Of the approximately 9,000 enrolled tribal members, about 7,800 live on or near the reservation. Total population of the Flathead Reservation is 28,000, though the tribes today control 2/3 of reservation land.
- When the Flathead Reservation was opened to white settlement in 1910, the tribes were plunged into poverty. Loss of free range for livestock and deterioration of traditional irrigation systems were catastrophic.
- Though the native population today is better off materially than many Native American tribes, incidence of poverty, chronic illness, and malnutrition is above the national average.
- Indian reservations are besieged by drug gangs, with inadequate levels of law enforcement.
- The lack of affordable housing has reached crisis proportions.
- With the death of traditional trade and barter systems, Native Americans are locked into money economies, including debt. Corporate America sucks money out while jobs and incomes are minimal.

# The NA Food Sovereignty Initiative Dates to the 1980s

From “Voices of the People: the 2023 annual report of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation,” Flathead Indian Reservation, Pablo, Montana.

Resolution No. 21-090, passed on July 13, 2021, proclaims hunger as a risk to the health, security and general welfare of the Tribes and directs necessary resources to achieve food security. Last year CSKT’s Food Sovereignty Pilot Program (FSP) made enormous strides to conserve and enhance the Tribal food system, going from one to six full-time employees.

There are five areas of focus: Build a community mindset for healthy foods; increase local cultivation and food production; build local food economies; integrate local, healthy foods into the community; and ensure CSKT food development and practices are aligned with CSKT values.

Additionally, work by the Office of Economic Development included working toward a meat processing facility as a potential Tribal enterprise, in an effort to increase CSKT’s food sovereignty Infrastructure. The meat processing facility will support Tribal cattle producers as well as wild game and bison processing.



# Flathead Bison Range Restored to Tribal Control in 2022



# Flathead Food Sovereignty Programs

- Focus is on locally-sourced and processed foods
- *Garden for Life* network gardens—8 tons of food annually from 7 gardens
- Reconnection to traditional foods such as wild game, fish, roots, and berries; hunters donate game meats to elders
- Provide elders with two homemade soups once a week; meal kits also provided free at drive-in locations
- Funding via grants from USDA, Headwaters, First Nations, NDN Collective
- Institutional partners: CSKT Tribal Education Project Aware, Kootenai Culture Committee, Séliš-Qłispé Culture Committee, Tribal Health, CSKT Natural Resource Department, Tribal Lands Department, Salish Kootenai College Extension, MSU Flathead Reservation Extension, Lake County Extension
- Private communities reviving food and ceremonial traditions

# On the Reservation



Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center  
Ronan, Montana

# Food Sovereignty in America: Washington County, Maryland



“Sunny Meadows”  
Mennonite owned and  
operated community  
garden center;  
Includes a grocery for  
local products



Local farm markets in  
Boonsboro, Maryland



Elderberry is a  
premier Native  
American medicinal  
plant.  
Two backyard  
bushes make a  
year’s supply of  
delicious  
medicinal tea



A day’s pickins’  
from the kitchen  
garden



On the back  
porch: peppers,  
basil, hummingbird  
feeder, butterfly  
bush

