

EXPLORATIONS IN ETHNOBOTANY: NATIVE PLANTS, TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT, AND THE UTE LEARNING GARDEN GRAND JUNCTION, CO

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ORGANIZATIONAL INTRODUCTION

Ute Learning Garden (ULG) Beautification and Advancement

Goal:

- Create an accessible and beautiful learning environment to fit the desires of Ute Tribal representatives and general horticultural standards

Means:

- Weed removal and transplanting native plants
- Develop and execute programming, including researching and writing content for interpretational signage
- Revive garden fountain and fix numerous irrigation issues

Foundation for America's Public Lands Grant Work

Goals:

- Determine Tribal interest in the BLM Seeds of Success (SOS) program
- Write strategic plan detailing promising opportunities for collaborative restoration and conservation of native and culturally important plants
- Focus on Tribal sovereignty concerning these topics

Means:

- Meet with ethnobotany gardens, federal agencies, Tribal individuals, and public and private individuals/companies in the area with outstanding knowledge or experience in the fields of seed collection and production
- Build high tunnel at KCA school on the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation.



Ute Mountain Ute Petroglyphs in Tribal Park, Towaoc, CO (left), aerial view of the ULG (middle), and rows of native grass at the Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Center, Meeker, CO (right)

INDIVIDUAL INTRODUCTION

Skills/Knowledge Development

Goal:

- Develop ethnobotanical "toolbox" as further asset to the team

Means:

- Woody Plant Diagnostics class
- Native Plant Master class

Networking

Goal:

- Connect with horticulture, agriculture, ethnobotany, public communication, and Tribal policy professionals of to further grant and garden goals

Means:

- Communicate throughout CSU Extension, Mesa County, other nearby universities, companies, and individuals, and federal agencies

PLANS IN ACTION



"Before," "during," and "after" shots of work throughout the summer on an example bed (top) and water feature (bottom) in the ULG



Programming with summer camps from the City of Grand Junction at the ULG (left) and with the Indigenous Science, Technology, Arts, and Resilience (ISTAR) camp on the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation (right)

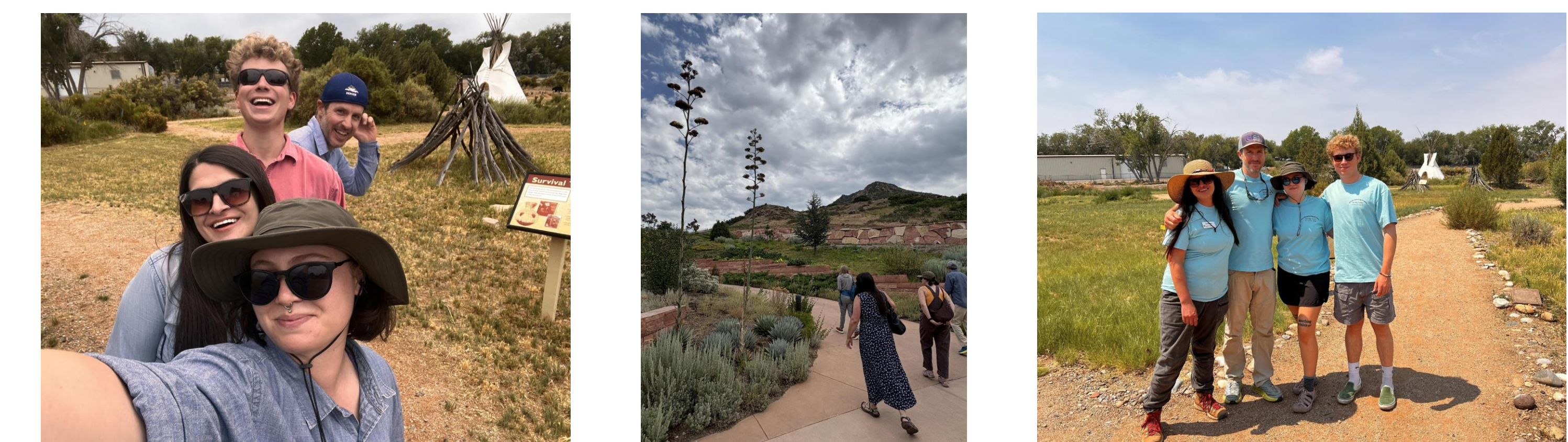


Early, middle, and late stages of work throughout two trips to the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation on a high tunnel for Kwiyyagat Community Academy

WHAT I LEARNED

In this internship, I learned about the importance of listening intently, because the stories of individuals and communities matter as much as or more than even the most reliable quantitative data. I learned that things can move slowly at the federal and institutional level, so doing impactful work must involve effective synthesis of projects across entities, finding where goals align, and pooling resources and people-power to reach such goals.

I also learned about countless native plants and the expertise held by Tribes to this day concerning their sustainable use for food, medicine, and ceremony. I am incredibly grateful for those who shared their knowledge with our team, and I hope the ULG serves as a useful space for more people to have similar experiential learning opportunities across age groups.



The team at the ULG (left), Red Butte Gardens at the University of Utah (middle), and after another day of summer camp programming at the ULG (right)

INDIVIDUAL NEXT STEPS

Projects in the planning and execution phases throughout the Colorado River Basin will continue to be supported by this team after my departure, and the synthesis of missions involving rangeland restoration, Tribal agriculture, seed collection and production, energy production, water sovereignty, and more will guide future work.

To further support my team members in executing all grant goals, I plan to continue refining and revising the strategic plan (grant deliverable) throughout the fall semester. As part of this work, I may also assist the team with maintaining the relationships built over the course of the summer, since I was the primary point of contact for some of them.

Many promising leads exist in the vein of collaboration with Tribes and federal agencies, so I am invested in keeping up-to-date on future funding opportunities that may exist and the impact of resulting projects, especially those that involve the ULG itself.