



# The Indian of Link



## Colville Reservation Gets W.E.T.!

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**Colville Confederated Tribes, Washington State** — Clean water is essential to all living things. Waters from the Colville Reservation flow into the Columbia River and eventually empty into the Pacific Ocean. Learning how to keep water resources clean is important to both adults and our youth who will someday be asked to make decisions about land and water resources. Dan Fagerlie, EIRP Project Director for the Colville Reservation met with Tribal leaders and other partners prior to applying for USDA 406 Water Quality funding to identify needs and design a program to meet those needs. Youth education was identified as one of the priority needs. WSU Ferry County Cooperative Extension was awarded funding for The W.E.T. (Water Education & Training) Project for Ferry County and the East Half of the Colville Reservation. The project was launched in June of 1999 at the 4-H Natural Resources Camp located at the Colville Tribe's Twin Lakes Youth Camp facilities.

Since that first camp, W.E.T. Staff and volunteers have conducted 174 programs across the project area with 3,712 youth participants (including youth participating in multiple programs). Hands-on activities help youth understand and remember the natural processes that keep water clean and ways we can help. Children from kindergarten through high school have enjoyed W.E.T. activities at school, camp and special events such as Environmental Days and Spectacular Saturday programs. The programs described below are examples from the twenty-eight different activities youth have enjoyed and learned from over the past four years.

*Watch that Water Run!* Classes from both Keller and Inchelium schools created by hand large models of local terrain that they use to see "hands on" ways to reduce potential runoff pollution. They began by learning to use topographic maps. Enlarged versions of these maps provided the patterns to cut layers of foam carpet pad along elevation lines. As the layers were stacked, youth saw how the spaghetti-like patterns of the topographic maps show the area's terrain. Applying the cheesecloth reinforced Plaster of Paris was messy, but fun! After painting and waterproofing the model, it was ready for action. Felt was laid over portions of the model to act as vegetation. Substances representing potential pollution from soil erosion, detergents and chemicals, over-fertilization and animal waste were sprinkled around the houses and barnyards that youth placed on the model. After spray-bottle "rains," youth compared runoff on "grassy" and bare areas. Sponges in lowland areas acted as wetlands. Squeezing the sponges after several "rains" demonstrated how wetlands help keep waters clean by filtering sediment and other substances. Youth used their models to demonstrate the importance of healthy vegetation in keeping water clean to others in their schools and communities, identifying simple ways we can adjust our day-to-day activities to help reduce potential runoff pollution in streams and lakes and to see devastating effects of noxious weeds or fire removed grass or tree cover.

*Exploring with microscopes:* We're all fascinated by what can be seen with a microscope. Hands-on experiences with microscopes reveal the tiny communities of

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*Continued on page 3*

## Colville Reservation *Continued.....*

organisms that depend on clean water and are the base of the food chain. Beyond that, using different types of microscopes promotes greater interest and enjoyment of science by Tribal youth. When learning how the “bugs” in the creeks indicate water quality, youth identify insect body parts and locate gills. Small hand-held Discovery Scopes are a favorite to get a closer look at these creatures. Dissecting field microscopes (that do not require power) allow more in-depth observation work great for some of the larger “little guys”. The projection compound microscope opens up the tiniest of microscopic worlds that each youth have found to the entire class at once as the image is projected onto a screen or wall.

USDA Extension Indian Reservation Programs delivered through WSU Ferry County – Colville Reservation Cooperative Extension are common across the reservation. Youth are involved in 4-H programs through traditional clubs, after school programs, school enrichment, natural resources camp and 4-H Challenge. Forest management, weed management and off-stream watering workshops are just a few examples of programs that help residents of the Colville Reservation in their efforts to protect reservation resources and incomes. Tribal support and involvement in these programs are working to advance knowledge, economic well-being and quality of life for the people of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.



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