

Graduates!



Gracie Arellano Maria Zendejas

Love from Grandma Lorna Martin,
Auntie Jackie and your mother Brenda

I would like to congratulate my granddaughters, Gracie Arellano and Maria Zendejas, for graduating from the Institute of Technology.

Gracie completed the medical administrative assistant program and Maria completed the medical assistant program. Congratulations, girls!

Michael Jackman

Michael Jackman has been actively participating in the 477 Self-Sufficiency Program (SSP) in Siletz and GED classes at Oregon Coast Community College.

He recently obtained his GED while at the same time recovering from an accident and collarbone injury. Michael's motivation and determination have now made him eager to begin college courses this summer.

SSP would like to congratulate him on overcoming a huge barrier with a Siletz Tribal Pendleton blanket and a \$25 Fred Meyer incentive gift card.

We wish you the best of luck in your future and congratulations on your accomplishment.

Michael Jackman and his
niece, Cheyanne Jackman



Tooth Talk: Do you have time to learn all this? References are available

By Mary Ellen Volansky, EPDH, MS

It's that time of year, the month before Culture Camp. As usual, I will cover a topic related to the history of oral health among Pacific Northwest Indians.

Why is this important? Because cavities and gum disease were not a problem for Indians before the Europeans arrived and introduced processed foods and refined sugar. As for all pre-industrialized nations, the life people led and the foods they ate all helped maintain good oral health.

We could go back to the time when cavities and gum disease were scarce – if we had the time.

Today, we can buy a can of blueberries at the local store. At the butcher shop or grocery store, we can purchase meat cut and ready to cook. It takes time to hunt down an elk (plus remove the skin/fur, clean the inside and carry it to your kitchen to make cuts of meat).

Time is needed to hike to where berries or other plants (wild onions, mint) needed for cooking or medicines are located. Some plants need time to dry; others need more time after drying to be ground into flour.

Consider the time it takes to actually make a pie. Also consider the time needed to build the fire to cook the pie or roast the meat and the time needed for cooking.

Have you considered how you would know which plants can be made into flour? Do you know how to make a bow and arrow for hunting a deer or elk? Will you spend the time to learn?

If you make flour from a plant that doesn't taste good, you know not to try that again. How about if you make flour from a plant that induces diarrhea (elder) or another that causes vomiting (devils club)?

So many plants and so many symptoms – how did people begin to sort out

the plants that caused diarrhea (broomrape) from those that treated constipation (salmon and thimbleberries) or those that eased pain (California poppy) from those that stopped bleeding (alfalfa)? Or those that helped (evening primrose) from those that ended life (poison and water hemlocks or wild cucumber)?

Besides the time it would take to learn which plants are helpful and which are not, time would be needed to determine what part of the plant is needed. Leaves (goldenrod), roots (camas) or stems (juniper) all can be used, not always from the same plant, yet many have several parts that are helpful (goldenrod and juniper). Some medicines used by Native people combined the leaves, stems or roots of multiple plants.

Now, say we know all the answers to the above, what plant and parts can be used and for what purpose. The next question is, what form of the plant is needed?

Would you want to take the plant as a tea or place it on a wound as a salve? Maybe breathe in the smoke (devils club) or inhale the steam from the plant in hot water? There are decoctions (plant and hot water mixture), infusion (tea) or others are just mashed and/or dried for consumption.

Which plants store well and which must be preserved in some way? Do you harvest the plant in the spring, summer or fall? Is there a traditional time for harvesting? You want to know these steps before you plan to use a plant.

You might need the plant in the middle of the night or in the middle of winter. If you need the flower of a plant, harvesting must be done with the coming year in mind, along with how much you might need during that time.

There is camas that has two varieties, one white and one blue, one helpful and

one not. Not a problem you say, look at the flower. Consider that harvesting is done after blooming is complete toward the end of summer to allow the bulb/root to grow fully.

Once you learned which plant was the one you needed, what part of the plant you knew would help best and how to prepare the plant for use, you have one more step to take. And step is the word.

You probably would already have learned where it grows, so now you need to spend time walking or hiking to that area and carrying it home – chaparral (ocean spray or common dandelion) or grasslands (camas, white or blue?), on the coast (salal) or high desert (sage), maybe in the wetlands (cowparsnip or skunkcabbage).

The bark of a tree (Pacific yew) may have the ingredient you need for your uncle's cancer, but how would you prepare the bark to get the best effect? Smoke it? Brew tea or place the leaves in grease for applying directly to the affected area(s)?

This specific plant was used for malignancies by Indians and currently is being used by traditional medicine in the form of taxol for the same reason. Another American Indian plant also used for cancer treatment is May apple, in the form of etoposide phosphate.

When you know all the answers to these questions, you can call yourself an ethnobotanist. But remember, 31,566 kinds of plants were used by American Indians for food, medicine or drugs; fibers and dyes; hunting and fishing; and ceremonial practices.

This number refers to all the plants in North America including Canada, so not every Tribe used a plant (it didn't grow in that Tribe's region) nor did each Tribe use the same plant for the same purpose (lobelia was used by four different Tribes

of people in North America for four separate and very different purposes).

Another aspect of all this is more difficult to present here, one I am even less knowledgeable about than ethnobotany. This would be the spiritual aspect of Indian medicine - the special or ritual steps used for harvesting, the specific aspect of collecting plant or plant parts and the prayers said before collection.

This spirituality is a very important aspect of medicine and health, Indian or not. And this knowledge cannot be found in a book or article of science on botany or chemistry.

So come by the Dental table at Culture Camp to learn about the scientific aspects of plants that have been used to treat dental problems, such as a sore lip or tongue or a toothache from a broken or worn tooth – and how Indians avoided cavities and gum disease. There will be pictures and write-ups on these aspects of ethnobotany and activities.

References for this article

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