



Courtesy photo

Manuel Martin and his two brothers, Tony and Enrique, are at the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge, where they and others made masks with renowned mask maker Lillian Pitt (Warm Springs, Wasco (Watalas) and Yakama (Wishxam)).

CTSI Jobs – Tribal employment information is available at ctsi.nsn.us.

Nutrition is deeply personal: Embody the food you choose to put in your body

By Nancy Ludwig, MS, RD, LD, Siletz Tribal Head Start Nutrition

As part of my role as a consultant nutritionist to Siletz Tribal Head Start, I offer information for families. This segment examines personal nutrition without addressing science.

Some say real change comes from personal growth. Can this be said about nutrition? Is nutrition personal or scientific?

I say that science explains what occurs naturally. Digestion and absorption happen without us telling our bodies what to do. We have choice, however, about what we provide to our bodies for its building blocks.

Welcome back to another Head Start school year. As a nutritionist, I realize that the scientific principles of nutrition don't matter much until we have a personal reason or clear benefit. When we see the personal benefit, nutritional choices become natural. Otherwise, it is just another thing that we "should do" or "should teach our children." The real benefit occurs when we embody the food we put in our bodies.

After all, the food we eat becomes part of our body. Our bodies are made from food materials. Food is what helps our bodies to grow, to repair and even to think. It matters.

How do we make nutrition personal so it becomes natural versus work? Some people "feel" the energy in food that they eat. They may feel the joy or the sorrow that occurred as the food moved through the process of being raised and prepared for consumption.

Be aware of what goes into the food supply as you feed others. Giving thanks



Courtesy photo

The positive family-style setting is part of Head Start nutrition.

and praying over food helps align our food with our bodily needs so it will be received and used properly.

Eating in community with others where we are loved and supported helps prepare us to receive our foods in more positive ways. These ideas may not seem like nutritional principles, but they lead to ideal nutrition. The positive family-style setting is part of Head Start nutrition.

Personal choice is another Head Start principle. The science of nutrition occurs behind the scenes in what is served. Children are encouraged to explore food choices through taste, smell, sound, sight and touch.

Conversation also supports the learning process. This experience leads to

personal choice. Children are encouraged to serve their own food, which supports personal choice. Children also observe the personal choices that others make, including their parents, teachers and peers.

Pleasure is often a source of confusion around nutrition. Sometimes people see sweet and salty snacks as a source of pleasure and feel conflicted when they are called junk foods.

Pleasure isn't just limited to the short term. Pleasure includes knowing our relationship with food, such as where it came from. Pleasure includes experiencing food in season when it is at its best.

Pleasure includes the attitude we bring to the table and how we feel after we leave the table. There is pleasure in our

ability to think, grow and learn when we choose foods that support our ideal function. These are among the concepts that lead to ideal nutrition without requiring label-reading skills.

Speaking of label reading, we support eating naturally wholesome foods that are close to the way they come in nature. These foods generally aren't packaged and don't even have labels. Some of the pleasure in sweet and salty foods is actually addiction and not lasting pleasure.

Knowing when we are hungry and when we are full is another concept that is deeply personal. If children are told to eat at a certain time or asked to finish food on their plate, they may not develop a sense of their own internal body cues.

It is important for children to have a safe space to discuss bodily sensations so they can learn to honor personal needs rather than overrule them for the requests of others. This does not imply disrespect of elders, but it honors awareness of oneself and where it fits with the whole.

I recently learned that, in my desire to contribute to the world, the best way to affect change is through the personal experience. This may mean a one-on-one conversation with another person. It may mean an article, such as this, when read by one person, inspires a deeper understanding and action that is shared with a child, that is shared with another and so on.

Happy sharing!

Siletz Tribal Head start offers my time at no cost to you to support family nutrition over the telephone. Please contact me if you have nutrition concerns about your Head Start child.