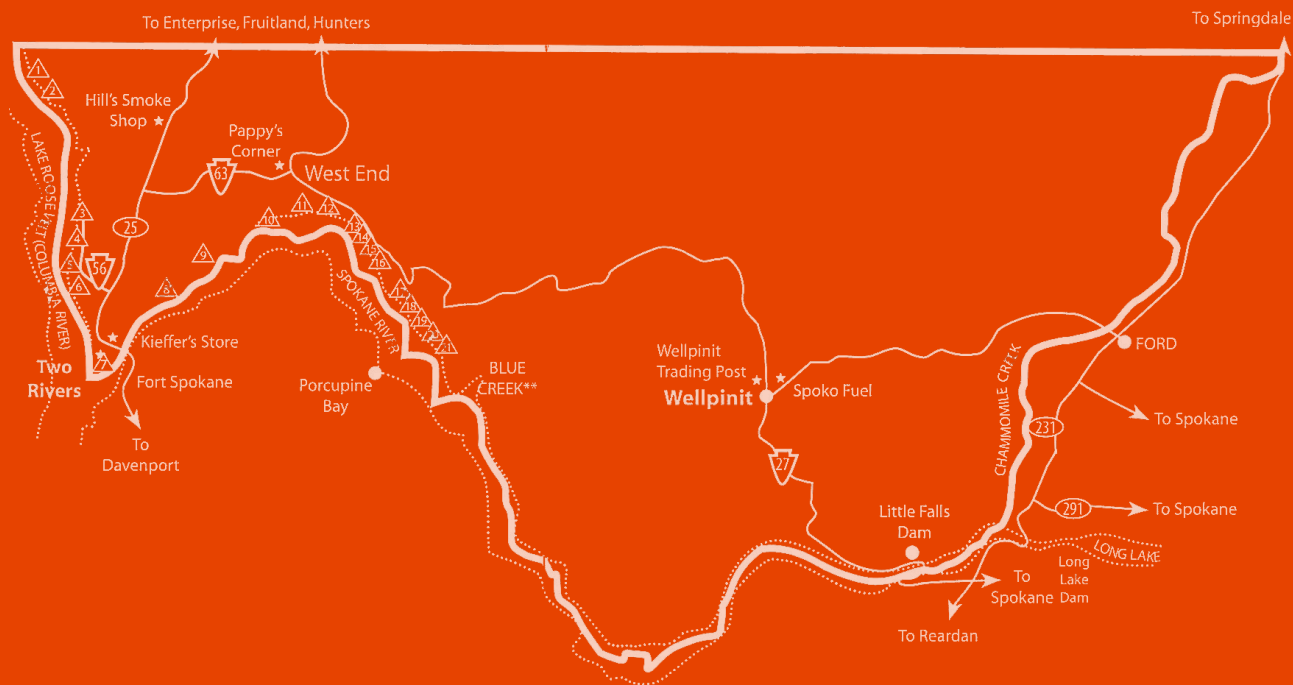


# WELLPINIT TRADING POST

A GATHERING PLACE FOR A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY



Wellpinit  
Trading Post





## THE CHALLENGE

The Spokane Tribe of Indians reservation has its headquarters in Wellpinit, a tribal community of about 2,000 people who have lived, learned, celebrated and grieved together for generations. One of the most popular gathering places in town is the Wellpinit Trading Post (Trading Post), a grocery store with almost 20,000 transactions per month. People greet each other by name and pick up where their last conversation left off. This food- and social-hub is an ideal location to offer healthier food and beverage choices, helping children learn healthier habits and offering adults the means to better manage their own health.

Specific to Spokane Tribe of Indians' health, one chronic disease affects members more than others—diabetes. And the tribe is not alone in being disproportionately impacted, diabetes isn't an equal-opportunity disease. Study after study shows that it hits some groups harder than others. According to Carrie VanComen, an Indian Health Services diabetes nurse, the diabetes rate in Spokane is 8.7 percent (2015) whereas the diabetes rate in Wellpinit is around 10 percent to 11 percent. This means more than 200 people in the community are living with diabetes.

Evidence on inequities shows that poverty and stress are powerful risk factors where diabetes is concerned. This is certainly true in Wellpinit, where, as with other American Indian communities, years of failed government and other policies and initiatives left the reservation economy with limited economic opportunity. Despite these struggles, the tribe continues to look for ways to improve their lives and the lives of future generations. The tribe has chosen to work with Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) and other organizations to help them achieve these improvements.

VanComen explained, "I have noticed a community trend towards improved blood sugar control. This may have to do with greater community interest in healthier eating and exercise and it may also be because the community sees the effect of diabetes on kidney and heart disease. Preventing diabetes is the key and we need to work with our youth on healthier habits to avoid diabetes. Having more healthy options at the Trading Post helps."

Additionally, the Wellpinit Community Coalition, facilitated by Sarah McNew, is striving to bring all Wellpinit sectors and community voices together to increase protective factors to promote the health and well-being of all community members. The more this community works together on a common goal and vision of health, the more impact they will have.



Orin Blomberg  
Scenes from Fort Spokane



Kathy Moss  
Trading Post Manager

*According to Sarah McNew, Children of the Sun Prevention Coalition Coordinator, State Targeted Response Team to Opioid Crisis, “Kathy has transformed the Trading Post in many ways. One thing that I noticed that has made a huge impact is the cleanliness of the store. The store used to have signs for alcohol and tobacco outside the store, on the doors, windows,*

*and the alcohol and tobacco were the first things you witnessed upon entering the store. Now, priorities have shifted; the signs have been removed and alcohol and tobacco were moved to the back of the store and behind hidden counters. As a community, we are more than alcohol and more than tobacco. Kathy has created an environment focused on health and wellness beginning with appropriate advertisement and the promotion of healthy choices.”*



Colleen Taugher  
Valentina drumming with the Wellpinit Circle - Dancing Horses

## WELLPINIT COMMUNITY

Per its Promise Zone designation, Spokane Tribe of Indians is considered federally as a high-poverty community, where the federal government partners with local leaders to increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment, reduce violent crime, enhance public health and address other priorities identified by the community.

Tribal council member Carol Evans said the reservation struggles with high unemployment, at times approaching 45 percent. The Trading Post is not only a conduit to healthier living on the reservation, but also to developing job skills, which is also an important focus for the tribe.

## TRADING POST

The Trading Post is the only full-service grocery store within 30 miles of the reservation. When new store manager Kathy Moss started in 2016, the store was more like a convenience store. As part of her work with SRHD and several members of the Spokane Tribe of Indians, Moss prioritized and implemented several healthy retail improvements during the three-year Prevention First grant (2016-2018) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A shared priority was to focus on creating a healthier environment at the Trading Post by changing the store model from a convenience store layout (with an emphasis on candy, sugar sweetened beverages, alcohol and tobacco) to a full-service grocery store. Additionally, SRHD used the following methods to help the tribe implement healthier changes.

# WHAT WORKED AND WHY



## MEETING CUSTOMER NEED

SRHD staff started by doing customer interviews and surveys to learn more about community shopping needs and challenges. Customers said they wanted more fresh items for grab-and-go lunches and snacks. They also wanted fresher meats and dairy products. Moss trained her employees to pull products off the shelves when they reached their sell-by dates. She worked with her deli employees to create a menu for made-to-order sandwiches and fresh-cut fruit and vegetables. Once these items were available, several businesses started placing catering orders including the tribe's administration office, Health and Human Services office and others. They continue to place catering orders for fresh fruit and vegetable platters, and sandwich platters instead of fried foods.

Interviews with staff from various communal meal sites in Wellpinit—U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service senior nutrition site, Spokane Tribe of Indians Head Start program, and Spokane Tribe Youth Center Boys & Girls Club—showed that sites were interested in purchasing food from the Trading Post if the process was easy, reliable and cost-effective. Within a couple months, Moss set up invoicing systems for site program directors to order fresh and shelf-stable foods at bulk pricing. Currently, all these programs supplement their regular purchases with Trading Post orders for milk, bread and produce.

Angie Matt, the director of the Spokane Tribe senior nutrition site shared, “The Trading Post came to our rescue a year ago by providing milk for our senior lunch distributions when milk was unavailable from the URM store in Spokane.”

## PARTNERING WITH LOCAL FARMERS

Working with SRHD, Moss partook in a new, local small-farmers collaborative, organized by Nils Johnson from Washington State University (WSU) Extension in Steven's County. SRHD financially supported the delivery of locally grown, freshly harvested vegetables to the Trading Post. The produce was quickly incorporated into a promotion for healthy convenient snacks and salads called Fresh-To-Go.

Moss said, “Purchasing local, fresh produce from the collaborative made our Fresh-To-Go salads so much more nutritious and delicious. We cannot keep them in stock.”

Kim Alexi, a community member who uses the Trading Post as her main grocery store, also noticed the local salads, “I see the Fresh-To-Go salads that my co-workers buy at the Trading Post, but when I get there in the afternoon they are all sold out.”

## CONNECTING WITH FOOD BANKS

As a food hub for the community, the Trading Post also embarked on a reciprocal relationship with local food banks, whereas, vouchers were redeemed at the store and the store donates product to food banks. Moss worked closely with Scott Peone, program manager for Spokane Tribe of Indians Commodities Food program (Commodities). Commodities provides about 30, \$65 emergency food vouchers each month that can only be redeemed at the Trading Post for ingredients to make a healthy meal.

Explained Moss, “We donate our fresh and shelf-stable products when they reach their sell-by date to Commodities, as well as to the food banks in the communities of Ford and West End.”

### CDC 'Prevention First' Grant

*This federal program intensifies work in state and large city health departments to prevent obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke and reduce health disparities through community and health system interventions. It is financed by the Prevention and Public Health Fund of the Affordable Care Act.*

# IMPROVING THE STORE ENVIRONMENT

Moss worked diligently with her employees and SRHD to create a healthier and more welcoming store environment. Many of the candy products were moved to the back of the store, new coolers were added to the front of the store to promote convenient fresh foods. Tobacco and alcohol advertising was removed along with alcohol exhibits and end caps. Sitting areas were created near the front of the store to encourage customers to gather and spend time together.

Elima Bird, a certified tobacco interventionist and Native Connections project director, praised Moss' focus on overall health, "Kathy took it upon herself to make this mindful choice not to advertise tobacco or alcohol. It bolstered plans we have for later this year to empower our youth to work on tribal policies that promote health and wellness for our community."

Moss worked closely and consistently with store vendors to explain and stand by her commitment to create and maintain a healthier store environment. Promotion, placement and pricing of healthy items helped move healthy product faster.

One example of enhanced promotion came in the form of English and Salish versions of Fresh-To-Go signage, created by SRHD with community input. Moss placed them strategically throughout the store to promote fresh grab-and-go foods, water and protein-rich, culturally relevant foods such as jerky and nuts.

Using a display to hang bananas next to the cash register also helped increase produce sales. More diligent, consistent care for the fresh produce mattered too. Sales of produce in July 2018 were 6 percent higher than in 2015.

## WELLPINIT TRADING POST



\*Spokane Tribe of Indians

## QUENCHING A HEALTHY THIRST

The store has a brand of water that they sell for 29 cents a bottle, making this healthy thirst quencher very affordable. SRHD urged Moss to set up an inventory system to track water and to assess change in demand over time. Health district staff supported Moss by contracting with a data input consultant.

Moss also worked with her food vendors to improve the inventory management software system. Between April 2018 and July 2018, water sales were approximately \$4,000 per month.

The inventory system was also foundational to another healthy goal for Moss and the health district. The Fresh-To-Go program success measure was to show a 5 percent increase in the sales of fresh produce. To do this required systematic inventory updates, increased staff produce management skills, and Fresh-To-Go signage to draw customer attention to the area.



## GETTING ACTIVE

SRHD also supported the tribe's wellness program under the Health and Human Services office on the reservation. A related well-being campaign got support from the health district via its design of a culturally appropriate brand for the campaign, based on community input. The campaign supports the following healthy behaviors:

- 8 hours of sleep
- 5 fruits and vegetables eaten daily
- 2 hours maximum of screen time daily
- 1 hour exercise daily
- Zero sugar-sweetened beverages, and zero alcohol or drugs

## SUSTAINABILITY

The community appreciates having a full-service grocery store where they can get ingredients for a scratch-made, healthy dinner; grab a freshly made sandwich on whole grain bread with colorful locally grown lettuce for lunch; or order healthy catering options for an office event.

The store manager and her employees are committed to continuing their work as the community food hub and providing a wide-variety of healthier options. The inventory is 80 percent up-to-date and Moss plans to train one of her motivated youth employees to be her part-time inventory manager.



# SPOKANE REGIONAL HEALTH DISTRICT'S ROLE

Spokane Regional Health District worked with several members of the Spokane Tribe of Indians and the Trading Post manager to implement a three-year Prevention First grant (2016-2018) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). SRHD used the following methods to help the tribe make changes.

- Interviewed 15 community members from eight service agencies on the reservation about the importance, challenges and potential for the Trading Post.
- Involved 10 key community stakeholders in the planning and prioritizing of positive changes for the Trading Post using stakeholder experience and knowledge of cultural preferences as well as healthy corner store best practices and science-based nutrition guidelines.
- Conducted a community-wide assessment of preferred products for the grocery store. A total of 106 community members completed the survey and determined that fresh-made sandwiches, fruit smoothies, salmon and fresh meat (burger) were top priorities.
- Created a culturally appropriate Fresh-To-Go Salish promotion for fresh produce, protein-rich snacks and water.
- Supported store manager in inventory management by contracting with a data input consultant.
- Supported travel expenses for Steven's County local produce cooperative to deliver to the Trading Post and food bank.
- Supported Wellpinit Health and Human Services Wellness Team in developing 85210 culturally customized logo to promote healthy lifestyles including eating five fresh fruit and vegetables a day and zero sugar-sweetened beverages (replaced by water).
- Provided encouragement and support to store manager through regular phone calls, photo documented changes, and prepared annual progress reports.

## CHALLENGE ADDRESSED

In partnership with SRHD Spokane Tribe has taken important steps to address diabetes and reduce consumption of alcohol and tobacco. The Spokane Tribe has passed policies, created organizational systems and environmental changes to sustain these efforts for years to come and are focused on creating a healthier next generation.



Healthy Communities Program

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