

GLITEC Gazette

SUMMER ISSUE | 2024



Lake Superior, Upper Peninsula of Michigan

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Stay Connected

Our quarterly newsletters are posted on the [GLITC](#) and [Bemidji Area Emergency Response](#) websites. To receive our newsletters and other updates in your inbox, [sign up](#) for emails on topics you care about, such as events, news alerts, reports, and funding opportunities.

A Message From GLITEC Program Director Christina Denslinger

The Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center (GLITEC) wishes you all a happy and safe summer! As we continue through the year, we remain steadfast in our commitment to serve the 34 federally recognized Tribes, four urban Indian communities, and three Indian Health Service (IHS) service units within the Bemidji Area (Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Chicago) and improve the health and well-being of Tribal populations.

As the weather has become warmer, the opportunities to gather increase. Whether it be site visits, trainings, conferences, or meetings, GLITEC has enjoyed the opportunity to continue to travel and gather with Tribes and other allied partners to collaborate and advance Tribal public health. The 3rd Annual Great Lakes Area Opioid Conference: Journeying Toward Wellness is one such event. GLITEC is grateful to all of you who attended this June conference.

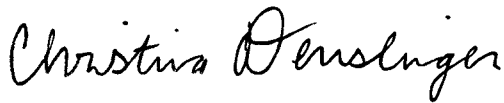
Additionally, GLITEC continues to engage in and support harm reduction efforts in the region. GLITEC offers fentanyl and xylazine test strips, wallet cards on recognizing and responding [continued page 2]



to an opioid overdose, and other educational materials. In partnership with the [Tribal Personal Responsibility and Education Program \(Tribal PREP\)](#), GLITEC also offers Narcan trainings. These resources and materials are part of GLITEC's ongoing efforts to support overdose prevention in Tribal communities.

Additional ongoing efforts at GLITEC include providing technical assistance, environmental health initiatives, and data initiatives such as data dashboards and data linkages.

As always, GLITEC is grateful for the opportunity to learn from, collaborate with, and support Tribal communities to improve health and wellness. GLITEC serves the Tribes and is ready to assist with public health or data needs. Feel free to reach out to us if you need any assistance with a project.



Christina Denslinger, PhD
Program Director, Strengthening Public Health Cooperative Agreement



Empowering Healthy Communities: HIV, HCV, and STI Prevention Grant Program

Written by Leopoldo (Eljay) Panganiban

GLITEC invites Tribes and urban Indian organizations in the Bemidji Area to submit [applications](#) for a human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) subaward opportunity. The purpose of this funding is to strengthen Tribes and urban Indian organizations' prevention and treatment efforts for HIV, HCV, and STIs.

This opportunity will provide up to five awards (\$100,000 each) to support projects addressing HIV, HCV, and STI prevention and care. Many types of activities may be conducted. However, the proposed project should address at least two of the four strategies outlined by GLITEC:

- expanding HIV, HCV, and STI testing, treatment, and prevention measures
- improving HIV, HCV, and STI data and surveillance
- implementing interventions for HIV, HCV, and STI prevention and care
- expanding STI-related skills and knowledge.

Applications must be successfully submitted to Dr. Kade Lenz (KLenz@glitc.org) by 4:30 p.m. CDT on August 19, 2024. Applications will be reviewed, and award notices will be issued within two weeks of the application submission deadline.

View GLITEC's [request for proposals announcement](#) to learn more.

Amplifying Tribal Voices and Concerns Regarding Environmental Health

Written by Kade Lenz, PhD, MPH

The National Tribal Toxics Council (NTTC), an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Tribal Partnership Group, held its spring biannual meeting at the Sky Dancer Event Center on the lands of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians in Belcourt, North Dakota. The meeting took place May 7 to 9 and brought together Tribal members, North Dakota elected officials, and EPA staff.

The NTTC works to empower Tribes by providing them with a platform to voice their concerns regarding toxic chemicals and pollution prevention. A key focus is ensuring Tribal perspectives are considered in the implementation of the Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA). The NTTC itself is comprised of seven members employed by Tribes or Tribal consortiums who have expertise in environmental health-related fields. For Region 5 (the Great Lakes region), Dr. Kade Lenz, a program director at GLITEC, serves on the NTTC. This regional representation plays a vital role in amplifying Tribal voices and concerns regarding environmental health and pollution prevention discussions.

The first day of the meeting kicked off with two emergency preparedness trainings on chemical safety. Attendees also participated in a presentation on EPA funding opportunities for Tribal programs. This was followed by a roundtable discussion to connect specific programs to available funding. Additionally, listening sessions were held to gather comments and concerns from Tribal members.

On the second day, EPA representatives presented a revision of the Clean Water Act, establishing a national framework for the EPA and states to honor Tribal treaties and reserved rights when setting water quality standards. Two EPA deputy directors were available to answer questions from Tribal members before the rule took effect on June 3, 2024. Additional information about the revision of the water quality standards under the Clean Water Act can be found on this [EPA webpage](#).

The final day concluded with a closed session for the NTTC and a meeting with the EPA to address Tribal concerns raised throughout the previous two days and to develop next steps. The next biannual NTTC meeting will be held in North Carolina at the end of September in collaboration with the EPA.



GLITEC Presents About the Effects of PFAS

Written by Afif Showkat, MSPH, BA

In June, GLITEC had the opportunity to present a poster at the National PFAS Conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The poster was titled PFAS Effects on Customary Practices of Native American Communities.

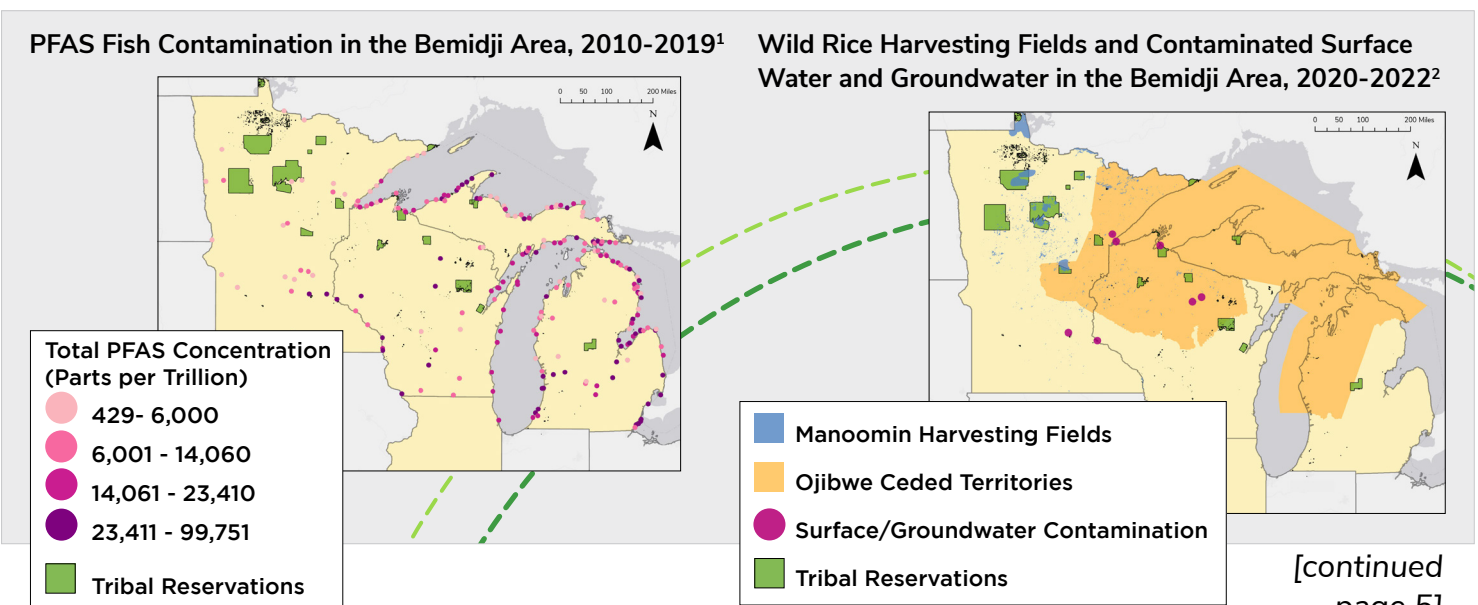
For the two-hour poster session, GLITEC met with a steady stream of conference attendees from various environmental organizations. Many attendees showed interest in the poster's Tribal perspective on PFAS effects and stopped to ask questions and learn more. Some of the representatives reached out via email to express their interest in the PFAS Community Discussion events that GLITEC hosts on a monthly basis.

Effects of PFAS on Native American Customary Practices

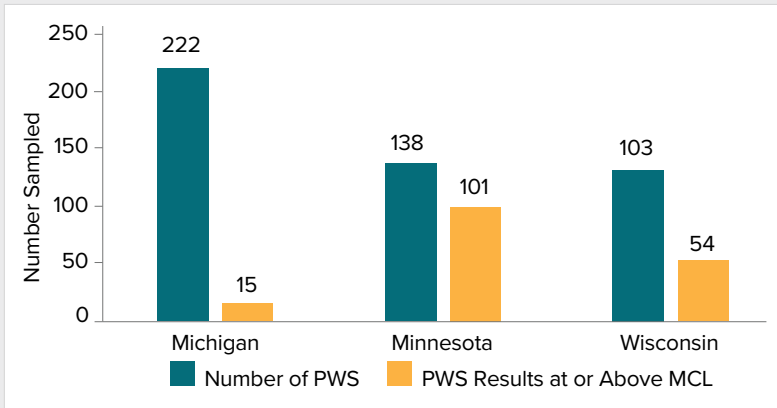
PFAS (or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are chemicals made by humans. They are present in everyday life and can have long-term health effects on people who are exposed to high levels.

PFAS contamination in fish, manoomin (wild rice) fields, and water poses a threat to the traditional practices and ceremonies of Tribal communities. With a number of fish samples, manoomin fields, and public water systems testing positive for high levels of PFAS, Tribal members may have (and continue to) ingest high levels of PFAS in their everyday lives. The contamination of water, especially the Great Lakes, disrupts the sacred relationship that many Tribes have with their local bodies of water.

Safeguarding customary practices from PFAS contamination requires mitigation strategies that integrate traditional knowledge, community engagement, and scientific expertise. There is a need for increased research about PFAS and for additional testing efforts to evaluate potentially contaminated sites in the Great Lakes region.



PWS Contamination in the Bemidji Area, 2018-2023³



Public water systems (PWS) are considered to be contaminated if they meet or exceed the EPA's fifth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR 5) maximum contaminant level (MCL). The MCL is 4.0 parts per trillion for drinking water and groundwater.

National PFAS Conference

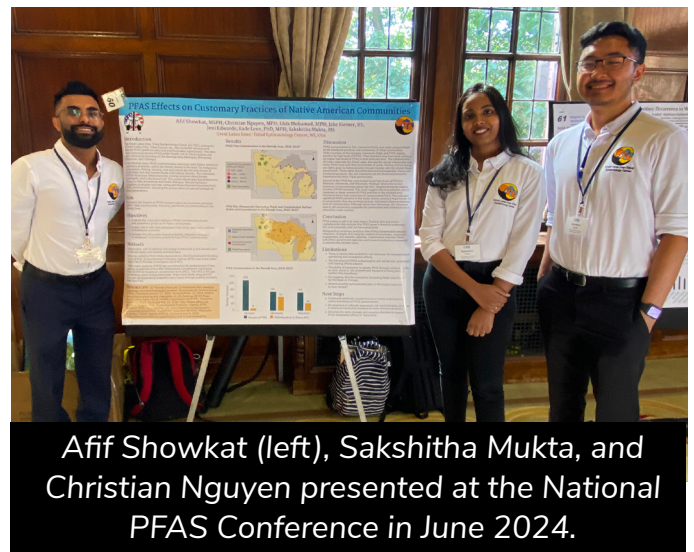
The three-day PFAS conference addressed the severity of PFAS chemicals by highlighting community perspectives on PFAS and hosting presentations from various organizations.

On day one, the conference introduced the concept of PFAS and described the current state. This information was provided through anecdotal stories from community members who described how PFAS has affected communities. There were also presentations from members of the U.S. House of Representatives and different environmental organizations including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy; Great Lakes PFAS Action Network; and National PFAS Contamination Coalition.

On day two, the conference looked deeper into the health effects of PFAS. Attendees listened to personal stories from community members and watched presentations from organizations such as the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, United Nations, Environmental Working Group, and University of Michigan.

The last day of the conference focused on what an individual, community, or organization can do to combat these chemicals. Speakers from different organizations and universities, including both the Center for Public Environmental Oversight and Clean Production Action, gave presentations on remediation methods that an individual or organization can use moving forward.

Along with the poster presentation, GLITEC was able to network with other organizations throughout the conference to spread the word about the environmental health work being done in the Tribal areas of the Great Lakes region. GLITEC is thankful to the organizers of the National PFAS Conference and the University of Michigan for hosting this event. [continued page 6]



Aff Showkat (left), Sakshitha Mukta, and Christian Nguyen presented at the National PFAS Conference in June 2024.

References

1. "Forever chemicals" in freshwater fish: mapping a growing environmental justice problem. Environmental Working Group (EWG). Published January 17, 2023. Accessed May 13, 2024. https://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/pfas_in_US_fish/map
2. GIS Maps. Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). Published March 20, 2023. Accessed May 13, 2024. <https://maps.glifwc.org>
3. PFAS Analytic Tools. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Updated 2024. Accessed May 13, 2024. https://awsedap.epa.gov/public/extensions/PFAS_Tools/PFAS_Tools.html

Understanding Sexually Transmitted Infections and How to Prevent Them

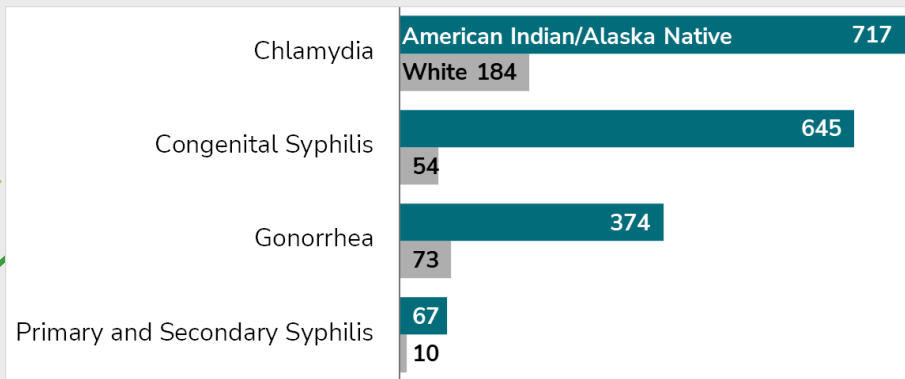
Written by Leopoldo (Eljay) Panganiban

What is a sexually transmitted infection?

A sexually transmitted infection (STI) is an infection that spreads through unprotected sexual contact (vaginal, oral, or anal) with another person. These infections can be caused by bacteria, viruses, or parasites.¹ There are many kinds of STIs. Common examples are chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. Syphilis includes both congenital syphilis (which is when a baby is born with syphilis) and primary and secondary syphilis (which are the first two stages of a syphilis infection).

American Indian/Alaska Native people face higher rates of STIs than white people.

Rates below are calculated per 100,000 people.



Source: CDC 2022 STI Surveillance Report

How common are STIs among American Indian/Alaska Native people?

The CDC's latest STI surveillance report highlights the impact of these infections across the United States. Adolescents and young adults age 15 to 24 are the most affected age group. It also discusses the disparities that exist in reported STIs. American Indian/Alaska Native people face higher rates of all STIs compared with white people, with primary and secondary syphilis rates increasing by four times over the past five years.² This highlights the need for more prevention and education efforts within Tribal communities. [continued page 7]

What are common symptoms of STIs?

Many people who are infected with an STI do not have symptoms. When people do have symptoms, they may include:

- abnormal discharge from the genital area
- unusual sore or rash in the genital area
- painful burning sensation when urinating.²

How can we prevent the spread of STIs in our communities?

- **Reduce Risk:**
 - Avoid sexual contact or only have sexual contact with a partner who is not infected and who only has sexual contact with you.
 - Get tested for STIs before having sexual contact if you or your partner are at risk.
 - Get tested for STIs if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. This will lower the chance that your baby will become infected.
 - Get tested again three months after any STI treatment since reinfection is common.
- **Use Protection:**
 - Always use a latex condom correctly during sexual contact (from start to finish).
- **Get Medical Advice:**
 - See a doctor if you have STI symptoms or think you might have an STI.

What is GLITEC doing to prevent the spread of STIs?

GLITEC provides a range of at-home testing kits from myLAB Box at no cost to IHS, Tribal, and urban Indian (I/T/U) clinics in our service area (Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Chicago). These include kits for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, HIV, and HCV.

Alongside these testing solutions, GLITEC also supplies HIV-related materials and resources such as condoms, lubricant, factsheets, and consumer information handouts. These materials are designed to support individuals in understanding their sexual health and in taking steps to prevent and manage STIs.



All kits and resources can be requested by submitting an [order form](#).

References

1. Sexually Transmitted Infections Surveillance, 2022. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated January 30, 2024. Accessed June 12, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/statistics/2022/default.htm>
2. About Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated March 25, 2024. Accessed June 12, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/sti/about/index.html>

Say *Hello* to Our New Team Members!



Robin Kimball, Fiscal Assistant

Hello, my name is Robin Kimball, and I am excited to join the GLITEC staff! I joined the team as the Fiscal Administrative Assistant on April 1, 2024. I previously worked for GLITC in other fiscal positions from 2003 to 2008 and returned to the organization in 2021.

I was born and raised in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, which makes me a “Yoopers.” I jumped the border into Wisconsin about 25 years ago. I have one daughter who lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband and my grandson. I am looking forward to visiting them there someday.

My family also has a cottage on the north end of Lake Gogebic, which has been in my family since the early 1900s. We all love to spend family time there, sitting on the beach during the day and relaxing by a bonfire at night. I also enjoy reading books, exploring some local waterfalls, watching wildlife in my backyard, getting my hands dirty in my garden, and spending time with my best friend: my 10 ½-year-old rescue dog Nala.

I am excited to be a new member of the GLITEC team.

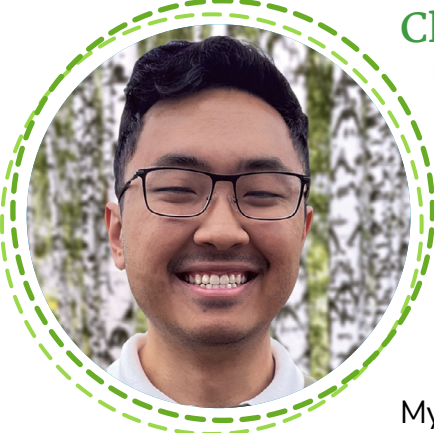


Jake Anderson, MPH – Epidemiologist

My name is Jake Anderson, and I could not be more excited to serve the Tribal communities in the Bemidji Area as an Epidemiologist for GLITEC. I work in the satellite office in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which is my hometown.

I graduated with a degree in biology from Marquette University in Wisconsin, and then I moved to Salt Lake City to work in a breast cancer research lab and to go play in the mountains. While there, I read a book called *Beating Back the Devil* by Maryn McKenna, which highlighted the disease detective work of CDC’s Epidemic Intelligence Service. It inspired me to become an epidemiologist, so I pursued my master’s degree in public health at the University of Utah and started working for the Utah Department of Health and Human Services as an epidemiologist for their Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance Program (HAI/AR). In this role, I was involved in HAI data quality projects and infection control assessments conducted in outpatient dialysis facilities. Additionally, I helped organize a conference focused on infection prevention in the dialysis setting, which brought together dialysis staff from around the state to learn about best practices in infection control and how important it is for patient safety.

Outside of work, I enjoy hiking, playing golf, skiing, strength training, and playing the piano. I am honored to be a part of the team at GLITEC. I am eager to learn about the culture and traditions of the Tribal communities in the Bemidji Area. I am proud to serve the Native people around the Great Lakes. [continued page 9]


Christian Nguyen, MPH – Epidemiologist

Hello everyone! My name is Christian Nguyen (pronounced “win”), and I am super excited to be joining GLITEC as an Epidemiologist in the Grand Rapids, Michigan, satellite office. I grew up in a small town called White Lake, about 45 minutes away from Detroit in southeast Michigan. Detroit is also where I went to school, at Wayne State University, and received my bachelor’s degree in public health and biological sciences, as well as my master’s degree in public health with a concentration in population health analytics.

My interest in public health stems from a lifelong interest in medicine, science, and numbers. I was originally interested in pursuing a medical degree, but I soon found out that was not the path for me. After some talking, I found out about public health, and at almost the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. I quickly fell in love with the field, and it felt like the perfect fit for me. With experience working with local organizations, hospitals, county health departments, universities, and nonprofit organizations, I am looking forward to bringing my skills to the organization, as well as growing them as a public health professional.

Outside of work, I am an avid sports enjoyer, with my favorite sport being football and my favorite team being the Detroit Lions. I also love watching basketball, playing pickleball and video games, bouldering, building model kits or Legos, and going out to eat with friends and family. I also love cats and hope to one day adopt one.

I look forward to my time at GLITEC and doing all I can to help support the communities that we serve.

Jackson Notier, Intern

Hi! My name is Jackson Notier, and I am thrilled to be a part of the GLITEC team as an intern this summer! I live in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and am currently studying for a master’s degree in public health, but I have taken some back roads to get here.

I’m originally from Holland, Michigan, where I was born and raised with a brother and two sisters. My interest in public health began when I was a child, inspired by my grandfather and grandmother who worked in the field for our county. However, my first love was to make short videos with friends, which grew into a career in video production. While living in New York, I assisted with creating commercials, some of which you may have seen at the duty-free section of an airport. I was still keen on making a positive difference for my community, so I volunteered for food banks, distributing meals to people throughout Manhattan. I was energized by the opportunity to connect with and offer a little support to people from all walks of life. I decided to change course toward a career in public health during the COVID-19 pandemic with the interest of researching the social and environmental determinants of neurodegenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer’s disease and multiple sclerosis. [continued page 10]

I am honored and grateful to be able to be a part of GLITEC’s team to support epidemiologic work for Tribal communities. I believe in the organization’s mission to improve the quality of life for all Native people. I look forward to learning all that I can and working with the GLITEC team this summer!

When I am not working, I am usually checking the tennis scores of any ongoing tournaments, playing tennis with a friend, running, or reading. I am very lucky to have my family who I visit in west Michigan whenever I get the chance.

Berry Pudding

There are no measurements in this berry pudding. The recipe depends on the amount of berries you have.

Ingredients

- Berries
- Flour
- Water
- Sugar

Cooking Instructions

1. Boil berries in a large saucepan. The water should be a couple of inches above the berries. Boil for approximately 10 minutes.
2. Strain berry juice and save.
3. Mash the berries to release the juice. Set aside the berries.
4. Mix enough flour and water to make a thick mixture but not a paste.
5. Using the same boiling pan, pour mashed berries and less than half of the saved berry juice back into the pan. Heat at medium-high, slowly pouring the flour mixture into the pan. Keep stirring. If liquid gets thick, pour more berry juice, but not too much.
6. Keep stirring the pudding until it comes to a boil; immediately remove from the stove. Do not leave the pudding cooking; it needs to be kept stirred. There should be some juice left.
7. After the pudding cools, add sugar to taste.



**Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council
Epidemiology Center
Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc.**

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www.glitc.org/programs/epi

Our Mission

To support Tribal communities in their efforts to improve health by assisting with data needs through partnership development, community-based research, education, and technical assistance.

Source: <https://www.firstnations.org/recipes/berry-pudding-northern-cheyennes-make-chokecherry-pudding>