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Undergraduate Research: A Culture for Research

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By Stephanie Jacques

K-State students initiate study of how Taos Pueblo Native Americans are saving an ancient culture.

Young Taos Pueblo partygoers cheered as water flowed through an acequia, a 500-year-old irrigation system, to a field planted with heritage seeds.

“Food systems can improve health, heritage and community cohesion but for those to happen, it has to be economically viable,” said Thomas. “It’s not possible to isolate yourself from the rest of the world, so they have to make friends with strangers.”

“Oppression and cultural abandonment drives younger generations away,” according to Wade. “Without the next generation, some feared the ancient culture, which had survived colonization, oppression and introduction of disease, might be lost.”

The students, both seniors and involved in undergraduate research at Kansas State University, are interested in how the Taos Pueblo Native Americans in New Mexico are able to attract youth to traditional agriculture and save an ancient culture.

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“Multiple organizations tried to help the community get on its feet and be sustainable, but it wasn’t working,” Wade said. “The organizations would lose interest or the funding would run dry because they didn’t take into account what people wanted.”

Today’s Taos Pueblo youth understand the community’s heritage. They started the Taos Pueblo Young Growers to engage the next generation in ancient agriculture practices and connect them to their ancestors.

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