Bio Sketch

Lucy Littlewolf Arias is an Early Childhood Educator who has crossed over to include nutrition and urban farming to areas of knowledge. Currently she works for Little Earth of United Tribes, a subsidized housing complex in South Minneapolis, for primarily Native American families. There she coordinates several projects working with families and children, including a half-day preschool program, Women’s Wellness Group, a SHIP initiative addressing nutrition, physical activity and smoke-free policies, and the Little Earth Urban Farm. Before working for Little Earth she worked for Reuben Lindh Family Services and the University of Minnesota. At the University she worked on research projects addressing lead exposure and quality early learning environments.

Lucy combines her knowledge of children and families with nutrition and lifestyle changes. She believes if an urban farm is to succeed as a source of fresh produce, families need to become engaged and reconnect with their food source. She is a descendant of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe and the Blackfeet Nation. She sits on the Allina in Backyard Community health commission, was a member of STEPS community consortium, and the CEED advisory board. Ms. Arias is also a founding member of PESCI, an environment advocacy group in the Phillips neighborhood.

Abstract

The Little Earth Food Justice and Youth Empowerment Project began with three areas of work: improving snack and meals provided by Little Earth programs, teaching families and children about healthy and traditional foods, and creating boarder community learning opportunities. The approach to this work was grounded in community organizing principals with a general philosophy that unless the community has ownership in a project and has the primary role in shaping the project, it will not be sustainable in the long term.

The project has been successful at getting people engaged and involved in issues related to health, nutrition, local agriculture and green jobs. The project has resulted in behavioral and attitude changes in the community: Fresh fruits and vegetables are now the norms for Little Earth programs, more families have been given the tools to make healthier and fresher choices for their families. New tools include knowledge and working examples, and the community has joined to grow the Urban Farm. Looking forward with support from partners and HFHL, the projects aims to continue nutrition and community learning opportunities, continued outreach to more families with support from community leaders, and ongoing urban farm growth to include permaculture principles and high-yielding staple crops.