

**“Supporting Community Revitalization through Community Garden Projects in
Indiana, Pennsylvania”**

**Mark Berezansky
Executive Director
IUP Research Institute
1179 Grant Street
Indiana, PA 15701**

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**Project Director:
Dr. Amanda Poole
Assistant Professor Anthropology
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
G1K McElhaney Hall
441 North Walk
Indiana, PA 15705
724-910-0753
pooleab@iup.edu**

ATP PROJECT TEMPLATE (June 15, 2014, Deadline)

PROJECT FOCUS: Students from the Cultural Ecology class at IUP will partner with the Indiana Community Garden to meet two goals: coordinate programs that enhance the cultural and biological diversity of the garden; and create educational resources that assist the garden in its mission to be a hub for educating people about sustainable practices and global food issues.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Course Number, Name, and Instructor:

ANTH 420: Cultural Ecology, Fall 2014

Instructor: Dr. Amanda Poole, Asst. Professor of Anthropology

Community Partner: The Indiana Community Garden (ICG)

The Indiana Community Garden is a local community initiative organized through the Indiana County Penn State Extension Master Gardener Program. The mission of the ICG is “to create a healthy and enjoyable community movement through planting, harvesting, cultivating, educating, cooking and sharing of knowledge and ideas.” The ICG has grown rapidly since it began in 2012, with enthusiastic support from community members, local businesses, and public institutions. The ICG now includes 39 raised beds (9 community beds along with garden plots designated for community use and rural food aid programs) and a range of sustainability initiatives (like rain barrels, composting and worm bins, a bat house, disease resistant apple trees, adding native plants to create a pollinator friendly garden, etc.) that were developed with the input and support of community volunteers and an extensive array of private, public, and non-profit partners. The ICG has truly become a catalyst for community action on developing and promoting local and accessible food systems in Indiana. Please refer to their website for information about their extensive projects, community programming, partners, and the recognition they have received from local and regionally granted awards:

<http://indianacommunitygardens.org>.

Our partnership with the ICG grows out of the 2013-2014 ATP project in which the ICG served as a key site on a wayfinding tour of Indiana, and ICG leaders graciously worked with anthropology students who conducted ethnographic research on the social significance of the garden.

Need: Conversations with leaders of the ICG have provided a clear vision about the ways in which this ATP project can help promote asset based development in Indiana through working with the garden to fulfill its mission and related goals. I first detail the need for this project, then discuss the problems and solutions that will be tackled through collaboration between anthropology students and the ICG.

Indiana County faces many of the socio-economic issues impacting the Appalachian Region, including a lack of economic diversification and living wage jobs in part due to deindustrialization and the boom and bust cycles that accompany energy extraction industries. With the drop of coal production in western Pennsylvania since the early 1980s, Indiana County has faced a declining population, high rates of rural poverty, and loss of living wage jobs. For Indiana County, the per capita market income from 2010 was \$24,421, 75% of the national average. The poverty rate from 2007-2011 was 18.6%, 130.0% of the national average.

It has been widely noted in the social science literature that community gardens can become catalysts for urban and rural revitalization, with potential benefits to food and economic security and community health. The Indiana Community Garden is part of a growing movement in Indiana County to foster a diverse, resilient local economy and promote healthy communities through developing a local food system. The ICG has been a local leader in working on this broadly popular approach to asset based development, and has succeeded in creating a number of active collaborations between local schools, non-profit organizations, social service agencies, churches, community centers, restaurants, food banks, and the farmer's market. While these efforts have been successful, the all-volunteer ICG is at a formative moment in which creative input and participation from ATP students will help them to achieve their goals and confront key problems facing the organization.

There are two main challenges facing the garden: reaching out to diverse community members in promoting equity and access to locally grown foods, and creating a bank of resources that can be used by the garden in fulfilling its educational mission. Some of the key challenges to community gardens include fostering cultural and biological diversity, as 'people grow what they know', and gardens (along with other key actors in alternative food movements) may face challenges in recruiting diverse participants. The ICG has made tremendous progress in intentionally crafting itself as an inclusive and welcoming space. A partnership with anthropology students will help them to further meet this challenge through recommendations based on research about the experiences, foodways, and gardening practices of community members from minority and lower-income groups. Students will also assist the community garden in meeting a second challenge by creating enduring resources, such as an ethnoecological tour of

garden plants and projects to be located at the garden with additional resources accessed online. Garden leaders note that the ICG is an all-volunteer organization: Although they have started many important new initiatives that promote sustainability and expand educational efforts, they face a shortage of time and resources to develop educational resources.

Number and description of planned meetings with the community partner

Given the extremely active nature of community garden volunteers and leaders, particularly in the fall, there are a number of planned meetings with which students will be involved. Students will meet as an entire class with ICG representatives four times; however, individually students will have many more encounters at the garden as they participate in the many community programs that are hosted there this fall. Early in the semester, community garden leaders will attend our class to discuss the project and provide a broader cultural and historical framework for the collaboration. Given that the garden is within walking distance from campus, we will also visit the garden early in the semester to get a tour and participate in gardening activities. These early encounters will allow students a chance to select particular programs that they would like to work on according to their interests (detailed below). After developing their project ideas – which include an ethnographic research component, students will meet with the community partner for input into the scope of their projects and their intended outcomes. Finally, the class will present the outcomes of their work to the community partners at a final public event at the end of the semester. As mentioned, students will be asked to assist with a number of events planned during the Fall semester at the garden, though they will be able to select events that fit their interests and schedules. Examples of these events include: The ICG workshop and booth at the Northern Appalachian Folk Festival, community planting days for garlic and winter greens as well as fall perennials, harvesting fall crops and seeds, putting the garden to bed for the winter, creating winter habitat for pollinators, preparing for and participating in the Day of the Dead celebration, workshops for grade-school students, Food Bank distributions, and the September candle light dinner at the garden.

Overview of the project, including its central focus (10-12 sentences):

The central focus of this project will be to partner with the ICG in order to meet two goals: coordinate programs that enhance the cultural and biological diversity of the garden; and create educational resources that assist the garden in its mission to be a hub for educating people about sustainable practices and global food issues. Students will divide into groups that tackle these goals through projects designed in collaboration with the community partner and informed by our environmental anthropology course content. Although students will be working on different projects, they will conduct ethnographic and ethnoecological research that will ultimately contribute to a compendium of educational resources for the garden, including on-site signage and online resources. These educational resources will include:

- An ethno-ecology virtual tour of the garden. Ethnoecology describes the interrelationship of cultural and biological diversity through a close look at people's knowledge and use of environmental resources and the cultural significance of place-based practices. These students will work with ICG members in charge of varied garden projects (from the new pollinator-friendly initiative to bat houses and the native plants plot).
- An ethnographic description (drawing from oral history interviews) of local heirloom seed saving practices that will be incorporated into educational resources on the significance and 'how-to' of seed-saving. These students will participate in coordinating the first annual seed swap coordinated by the ICG, the IUP student ecology club, and the Northern Appalachian Seed Bank.
- Assistance with and documentation of diversity efforts at the garden. To date, numerous outreach events and planting efforts have taken place at the garden that focus on making the garden an inclusive place and educating people about cross cultural foodways and food issues. Students will work closely with ICG garden members as they help with programming. They will produce educational resources which contribute to the 'ethnoecology tour' in the form of aspects of the garden that can be used to educate people about global food issues and food justice

Goals and objectives:

- Students will work with Indiana Community Garden to create educational resources that help the ICG to meet its goal of becoming a model for sustainability practices and a hub for diverse community involvement in building a local food economy
- Students will use methods from environmental anthropology (including ethnoecology methods, ethnography, oral history, and digital and visual anthropology) to conduct original research that will help them to develop the educational resources requested by ICG leaders
- Students will represent their research in written, and online formats for use by ICG
- Students will be engaged as active, informed, and empowered learners as they participate in planning and conducting garden events, and present the results of their work to the ICG, at a public meeting, at academic conferences, and at the ATP annual meeting in December 2015
- Students will explore the usefulness of public, applied, and environmental anthropology methods and theories as participants in a community project that supports local efforts around sustainability issues

Activities that meet the goals/objectives

- Class will meet regularly for academic discussion, lectures, methodology training, analysis of readings, writing assignments, and discussion of community work

- Students will keep reflective journal/ethnographic fieldnotes about their work at the garden
- Students will meet with ICG leaders at the beginning of Fall Semester, and throughout key phases of the project (as detailed above)
- Students will work with community partners and draw from principles and methods in environmental anthropology to design research projects that will allow them to develop educational materials useful to the ICG
- Students will coordinate and conduct a public outreach event at the end of the semester to share the results of their research
- Students will present on their final product at the ATP meeting in Washington.
- Students will also present a poster at the Appalachian Studies Association annual conference in March 2014, and at local conferences including the IUP Undergraduate Scholars forum and PASSHE Undergraduate Anthropology Conference

Project outcomes:

- Development of leadership and citizenship skills among students engaged in the project
- The strengthening of writing and oral presentation skills among students engaged in the project
- Contribute to enhancing community assets in Indiana- including the community garden and broader efforts to develop a local food economy
- Contribute to economic growth in Indiana by supporting community-building activities (in the words of ICG volunteer coordinator – ‘We are attracting people to Indiana because this is a place where exciting things are happening’)
- Create potentially lasting partnerships between campus and community groups
- Build community through fostering culturally diverse community resources and events
- Provide the opportunity for students to conduct community based research, present on their work, and be exposed to work occurring in other areas of Appalachia

These outcomes will be demonstrated through:

- A community based project that partners student with the Indiana Community Garden to conduct research and compile educational resources that help the ICG meet its goals: on-site signage and digital resources that provide an ‘ethnoecology tour’ of the garden; An ethnographic description about seed-saving practices and local agrarian heritage to be included in the ethnoecology tour and online resources; Documentation and facilitation of culturally diverse program to be included in the ‘ethnoecology tour’ in the form of aspects of the garden that can be used to educate people about global food issues and food justice

- The creation of a final report and multimedia presentation for campus and community stakeholders
- Presentation of student and community work consisting of a multimedia overview of the project and its outcomes at the ATP conference in Washington, D.C.
- Presentation of project outcomes to the Indiana Community Garden
- Presentation of student and community work in a free public event in downtown Indiana at the end of the semester
- The production of a poster for the ATP conference
- Presentation of a poster at the Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference, March 2014; the IUP Undergraduate Scholars Forum in April 2014; and the annual PASSHE Undergraduate Anthropology Conference in May 2014
- Research that is consistent with the goals of the ARC strategic plan