



Francesca (Frankie Willard) Benson

Francesca grew up in Chamberlain, SD and graduated from Chamberlain High School in 2012. She is an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, loves to learn all she can about her culture, and has a passion for working with Native American people.

Francesca attended college at South Dakota State University where she completed her BS in Dietetics (2016) and went on to receive her master's degree in Nutrition and Exercise Science (2018). Francesca was on the Dean's List and was a part of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society throughout her years in college. During her graduate studies, she wrote and published her thesis work titled "Limited Availability of Foods and Traditional Foods in Grocery and Convenience Stores in the 6 High Obese Counties in South Dakota, including Native American Reservations".

Francesca married her husband, Austin, in the fall of 2018 and they currently live in Chamberlain, SD. They love being active together and enjoy biking, fishing, hiking, and just spending time outdoors when they can. Francesca has lived with Type 1 Diabetes since the age of 3. She knows and understands what it means to live with a chronic disease and how nutrition and lifestyle can play a vital role in management and treatment. Francesca is a Registered Dietitian, Licensed Nutritionist, and currently works as a Nutrition Field Specialist for SDSU Extension. Her office is located on the Lower Brule Sioux Reservation and she spends a majority of her time on both the Lower Brule and Crow Creek reservations.

Her passion for working with Native Americans stems from a variety of places including her previous job as a camp counselor with St. Joseph's Indian School, learning and understanding the traditional way of life, being a jingle dancer, and living so close to the reservations growing up. Her passion is to reduce food insecurity on Native American reservations as well as promote efforts of food sovereignty and food accessibility. Ultimately, she wants everyone to live a healthy, happy, and prosperous life.