
PASSAMAQUODDY TRIBE



Project Title:	Passamaquoddy Language Revitalization Implementation Project
Award Amount:	\$389,674
Type of Grant:	Native Languages
Project Period:	Sept. 2010 – Sept. 2012
Grantee Type:	Tribe

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 6 full-time equivalent jobs created
- 25 Elders involved
- 295 youth involved
- \$85,460 in resources leveraged
- 480 individuals trained
- 11 partnerships formed
- 1 language survey developed
- 100 language surveys completed
- 6 language teachers trained
- 230 youth increased their ability to speak a Native language
- 48 adults increased their ability to speak a Native language

BACKGROUND

The Passamaquoddy Tribe is located in eastern Maine in the Tribal communities of Indian Township and Pleasant Point. The Tribe has a total of 3,369 members, about 50 percent of who live off-reservation.

In the fall of 2008, the Tribe conducted a language survey to determine the status of the Passamaquoddy language. Survey results showed a significant decline in use of the Native language: people in the age group

60 and above had a retention rate of over 90 percent, while the age group 30 to 50 years had a retention rate of only 30 percent. This reduction in language retention demonstrates how the instructional approaches used for the past two decades, while beneficial, were not adequate to support long-term revitalization of the Passamaquoddy language.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to create a base for Passamaquoddy language curriculum by using the Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Dictionary, published in 2008, as a source for recording fluent speakers. The dictionary was the result of a 30-year effort to document the language and contains over 18,000 entries.

The project's objective was to produce sound files of all dictionary entries for use as a Passamaquoddy language instruction tool. Project staff recorded approximately 18,000 words and an additional 12,000 sentences; over half of the word entries have one or two sample sentences and many entries have two different people speaking the word. Project and Tribal staff are continuously editing and adding to the database to ensure the highest quality product is available for

future generations to hear and learn the language.

At least 20 speakers participated in recording sounds files. They often worked in teams to decide on the correct pronunciation and help each other before recording. Some Elders were paired with young adults so the younger speakers could help with the technological aspects and learn from the Elders. Project staff reported a high level of collaboration among the speakers and others who worked on the project to achieve accurate recordings; including finding and agreeing upon new words not included in the original dictionary. As a matter of quality control, the recordings were not available to the public until they had gone through a series of reviews: a linguist and a fluent Tribal Elder listened to each file to ensure the recordings were high quality and the words were pronounced correctly.

Project staff worked with the University of New Brunswick to create an interactive language portal where the sound files were uploaded. This website is free to the public, and includes all recordings produced through the project, as well as a number of videos featuring fluent speakers discussing Passamaquoddy history and culture. Although part of a separate project, the videos supplement the sound recordings. A language learner can use the site to search for any word in Passamaquoddy or English, and find an entry with the recorded word, an example sentence, and a link to a video where the word is used in conversation. Teachers in the Tribal school already have started using the site in fifth through eighth grade classes. Project staff conducted language classes utilizing the portal with Tribal employees ages 30-50. Additionally, project staff held trainings for nearly 500 community members on how to use the language portal site.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The goal of the interactive portal was to use technology to replicate the way Elders learned the language; the project director expressed that with this technology, the Tribe now is on strong footing for language preservation. Evaluations from language classes and comments from the community are positive regarding the portal site helping people learn the structure of the language in addition to vocabulary. The project involved many people who generously gave their time and knowledge, with tremendous support and goodwill from the community. As a result, saving the language is a greater priority for the Tribe, and the web portal is the most significant language resource they have for the future generation to teach and learn Passamaquoddy.

Hearing the language has made youth feel pride in being Passamaquoddy. Tribal members who know the language but do not speak it—those with “passive fluency”—are reminded of words they may have forgotten. The site has far-reaching effects since Passamaquoddy members who live away from the reservations can access it, as well as an additional 8,000 Maliseet people in Maine and New Brunswick who use the same language. Through the portal site people also can learn about Passamaquoddy stories, philosophies, and beliefs as there is a tremendous amount of cultural information about the past and present Passamaquoddy way of life in the videos. Increasing cultural knowledge and language proficiency provides a connection to cultural and Tribal identity for all community members.

“This is the legacy we will leave the younger generation. [It] will go a long ways for them to teach their children.”

Donald Soctomah, Project Director

WESGET SIPU, INC.



Project Title:	The Preservation of the Ancestral and Cultural Heritage of the Maliseet and Micmac People Known as the Wesget Sipu Tribe of the St. John Valley, Maine
Award Amount:	\$458,463
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2009 – Sept. 2012
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 7 full-time equivalent jobs created
- 20 Elders involved
- 25 youth involved
- \$41,022 in resources leveraged
- 25 individuals trained
- 17 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Wesget Sipu Tribe has 481 members who reside in the rural community of the Upper St. John River Valley in northern Maine. The Tribe is made up of Maliseet, Micmac, and Acadian people, whose ancestry comes from Tribal communities of Maine and neighboring Canadian Provinces. Currently the Tribe is not federally recognized and operates as a nonprofit organization.

In the early 1900s, colonization created economic limitations for Native people, who had relied on traditional cultural ways for their livelihoods. As a result of adaptation to these limitations, the Maliseet and

Micmac ancestral heritage of the Tribe is in jeopardy and will soon disappear if it is not documented. There are very few 17th- and 18th-century certified genealogical documents in the U.S. and Canada, and among the Wesget Sipu there are Elders who have extensive knowledge of the local Native heritage, but they are aging and soon may be unable to share this knowledge. Local economic and environmental conditions also are causing many young Tribal members to move away from the area, and all members have less time to devote to cultural activities and traditions.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to preserve the Maliseet and Micmac ancestral and cultural heritage of the Wesget Sipu Tribe. The first objective was to verify and document the family genealogy of at least 360 (75 percent) Wesget Sipu Tribal members. Project staff provided training for the existing Tribal genealogist to become certified in basic genealogy and archiving, and using original family documents she verified a total of 398 genealogies by the

end of the project period; the genealogies were entered into Family Treemaker software for documentation. Project staff also partnered with the Acadian Archives at the University of Maine at Fort Kent to store all ancestry files, including paper and digital copies. The project team's original intention was to create a website for the public to be able to access the genealogies, but due to privacy concerns the Tribe developed a new policy that members must request their own genealogies from the Tribal office. The Tribal Council also adopted a policy that every new member has to complete a genealogy.

The second objective was to research the anthropology of the Micmac and Maliseet people of the upper St. John Valley, and place the research findings, including articles, maps, photographs, and other materials, in the Acadian Archives. To carry out this research, project staff hired an anthropologist who traveled around the state of Maine and the Canadian Provinces of New Brunswick, Quebec, and Nova Scotia to collect documentation. As a result, the Tribe now has at least 4,057 pieces of Wesget Sipu cultural materials, which are all stored in the Archives for preservation, reference, and display.

The third objective was to create a permanent archived file of at least six video recordings of oral histories and 12 video-tapings of cultural demonstrations by Wesget Sipu Elders, and to establish youth-Elder apprenticeships. The project anthropologist recorded and transcribed seven oral histories from Elders, and all videos, transcripts, summaries, and audio CDs for each interview are stored in the Wesget Sipu office and the Archives. In addition, project staff hosted youth activities every Saturday during the grant period, with 15 youth-Elder apprenticeships formed. Generally three to five of the activities were filmed per quarter, resulting in 14 DVDs

documenting cultural activities that are stored in the Archives. Up to 20 youth attended the weekly activities, including youth from nearby Canadian communities where many Tribal members have family, and volunteers will continue to conduct these activities beyond the project's end.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Tribe's previously untold story is now documented through verified genealogies and recordings of unique cultural histories, resulting in revitalization of the Tribe. Chief Donat Cyr stated this project has been very timely because in another 10 years the culture could be lost completely, so they need to capture and pass on traditional knowledge now. Project staff reported the benefits are most evident at pow-wows and community events where youth are playing a much more active role and displaying greater interest in the Tribe.

Many Tribal members were raised knowing who they are, but were cautioned to be proud quietly because there are many prejudices against the Native culture. Therefore, the culture was not visible to youth growing up. Through this project, however, they learned much more about their own heritage. Chief Cyr described the participating youth as showing a deeper awareness of and pride in their identity, and as leaders in carrying the culture forward.

Documenting the history and preserving the culture also made the Tribe more visible in the area; once the community heard about the things they were doing people wanted to help. As a result, there is greater acceptance from the non-Native community of the Tribe's presence. Furthermore, processes for establishing descendency and enrollment are in place, and the anthropologist and genealogist will continue their work on a volunteer basis. With this increased organizational capacity, the Tribe is better prepared to apply for federal recognition.