

INETNON ÆMOT NATIBU/AMMWELIL SAFEYAL FALUWASCH



Project Title:	Enhancement of Cultural Self-Sufficiency through Revitalization of Traditional Healing
Award Amount:	\$157,327
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2007 – Dec. 2008
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 5 jobs created
- 1 Native American consultant hired
- 112 elders involved
- 10 youth involved
- \$50,660 in resources leveraged
- 1 individual trained
- 16 partnerships formed
- 1 product developed

BACKGROUND

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is comprised of fourteen islands with a total land area of 184.25 square miles. Once comprised primarily of indigenous Chamorros and Carolinians, the majority of the CNMI’s population (56%) is now of Asian ancestry. The recent wave of migration and influence from Asia has posed social and cultural challenges to indigenous knowledge systems and practice. In response, myriad indigenous organizations have made efforts to preserve traditional ways.

The Inetnon Æmot Natibu/Ammwelil Safeyal Faluwasch (IÆN/ASF) is a nonprofit organization formed in 2007 that advocates, recognizes, and supports traditional healers in the Northern Marianas; helps protect habitats of medicinal plants; documents the healing tradition in vernacular languages; and publishes educational materials in print and electronic formats. Based on the island of Saipan, the organization also serves the less populated islands of Tinian and Rota.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to help revive and sustain the tradition, knowledge, and practice of traditional healing in CNMI.

The project’s first objective was to provide the community with a comprehensive tri-lingual directory (English and Chamorro and Carolinian) of indigenous traditional healers in the CNMI. The 700-page directory was designed to recognize traditional healers and allow them to share a portion of their knowledge and practice with the community. The healers’ participation in the directory was voluntary, and some healers were reluctant to share practices due to what they perceived as the spiritual nature

of their knowledge. Project staff worked with the healers to copyright the information in the directory to ensure the ownership of the knowledge remained with the healers. A total of 112 traditional healers agreed to be in the directory.

The project’s second objective was to convene two community events on traditional healing and practices. The community events, titled traditional healing symposiums, were held on the islands of Tinian and Saipan and included presentations on the indigenous medicinal plants by healers and experts from the CNMI Department of Land and Natural Resources. A total of 45 people attended the Tinian symposium and 77 people attended the symposium on Saipan. In addition to the symposiums, IAN/ASF disseminated information of this project to 13,909 people through the local media and by giving presentations at the schools, village meetings, and cultural events.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The directory of traditional healers is the first of its kind on CNMI. The creation of the directory allowed traditional healers to improve their knowledge of cultural practices and promote the conservation of many indigenous plants.

Some traditional healers expressed that as this directory was created, they became aware of other healers on the islands of CNMI. This networking of healers improved the knowledge of the medicinal plants in the CNMI and helped to sustain and expand the Chamorro and Carolinian traditional healing practices. Project staff stated that because of the symposiums and extensive outreach, some community members are preserving the indigenous medicinal plants previously thought of as just weeds.

Staff distributed the directory to the schools and libraries of the CNMI, and the CNMI government, as well as to all the healers and others that participated in the project. Many of the activities of IAN/ASF will be sustained through sales of the directory.

“Without the revitalization of our traditional healing practices, this is our cultural end.”

Liz Rechebei,
IAN/ASF Board Member