
BURT LAKE BAND OF OTTAWA AND CHIPPEWA INDIANS



Project Title: Burt Lake Band Strategic Action Plan

Award Amount: \$198,284

Type of Grant: Social and Economic Development Strategies

Project Period: 9/30/2004 – 5/30/2006

Grantee Type: Native Non-Profit

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 2 jobs created
- 20 elders involved
- 11 youth involved
- 28 people trained
- 7 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Burt Lake Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians is a non-profit community organization in Northern Michigan. It is a state-recognized Tribe that sits on 20.5 acres of land. The Tribe has applied for federal recognition. By the final two months of the Project, the Tribe was still awaiting the federal decision. When the Tribe submitted its application, it had 650 members many of whom lived in urban areas rather than their traditional lands.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Burt Lake Band Strategic Action Plan (Project) was to develop a strategic plan that could be utilized to guide the Tribe to meet prioritized goals. The Tribe wanted to create a strategic action plan with considerable community participation in preparation for the restoration of the Tribe's recognition. The strategic action

plan would be used to direct the Tribe in its quest for growth and change.

This project encountered a series of challenges that made achieving the objectives difficult. One of the principal challenges was the geographical location of the Project's administrative center. The office for the Project is located in Brutus, Michigan which is only about 20 miles south of the Upper Peninsula. There is an abundance of snow in this area making travel difficult. A large majority of the Tribe now lives in the urban areas of Lansing and Grand Rapids, more than 200 miles from Brutus. Project location also made hiring and retaining staff difficult. Having had so many difficulties with hiring and staff turnover, the Project was far behind schedule and had to request a no-cost extension through May 2006.

Another challenge was the lack of community participation. Initially when the community was polled, 74 percent of the respondents said they wanted to participate in the planning process; however, tribal enrollment dropped from over 600 to 320 members due to compliance rules for federal recognition. When meetings were held, attendance was lower than anticipated.

However, a core group of community members did become involved.

The numerous challenges the Project encountered made reaching its objectives difficult. The staff and core group persevered and worked through their objectives as best they could.

The first objective of the Project involved establishing a team to guide the development of the Tribe's strategic plan. Most of the activities within this objective were completed; however, the staff and core group made some changes to the Project plan. The biggest modification was dropping the originally-proposed "Healthy Community Strategic Planning Process." Training was not completed in this process because the process was deemed unworkable.

The second objective was to hold five strategic planning meetings and a two-day Strategic Planning Workshop to develop a draft strategic plan that contained cultural, economic and social sections. This objective was partially completed. Staff and Tribal leaders had a difficult time involving the community in planning as required in the work plan. By the end of the Project, a draft had been created and was going to be presented to Tribal Council for review.

The last objective was to involve cultural, social and economic subcommittees in the review and incorporate their feedback into the draft. The final version was to be disseminated to all Tribal households. Some work was done in the development of the subcommittees, but since the draft had not been presented to the Tribal Council, this objective was still in progress.

The Strategic Action Plan is to be completed during the no-cost extension period.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The Tribe has seen an increase in involvement and greater interest from the community. Elders have taken a keen interest in the Project and are coming to the meetings and sharing their perspectives. A highlight from the Tribe's newly established cohesiveness was the involvement of several people in the preservation of the Tribe's burial grounds. Tribal members came together and took pride in restoring their burial grounds by making crosses and landscaping the grounds.

Tribal Council members took an active role in the implementation of the Project. They have shown their leadership by the increased contact they have with membership. They have renamed the Tribal Council meetings "Council and Membership" meetings exemplifying some of the positive impacts the Project has had. The Tribal Council Chairman felt that the Project had benefited the community and stated, "The Project has been helpful for the community and Council." He explained that they look forward to seeing where it can take them.

SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS



Project Title: Ojibwe Interpretive Center Planning Grant

Award Amount: \$188,723

Type of Grant: Social and Economic Development Strategies

Project Period: 9/30/2004 – 2/28/2006

Grantee Type: Tribe

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 1 job created
- \$3,356 in resources leveraged
- 500 elders involved
- 70 youth involved
- 15 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians is part of the Anishinaabe or Chippewa people. The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe is the largest Tribe in Michigan and one of the largest in the nation with a membership that exceeds 30,000. Their reservation is located east of the city of Sault Ste. Marie and spans 1,265 acres of land. There are close to 12,000 Tribal members living in the eastern seven counties of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

PROJECT PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Ojibwe Interpretive Center Planning Grant (Project) was to develop a comprehensive plan for the creation of an interpretive center. The Tribe wanted to develop a plan that would make the Center multi-faceted. It planned for the Center to include an interpretive museum,

storage for cultural items, historical archives, Anishinaabek language resources and cultural division offices. The grantee also wanted to include classrooms and conference areas. To better promote their culture the Tribe planned to include a theater, restaurant and art gallery. The purpose of the interpretive center was to preserve and share the Tribe's culture as well as to educate the general public.

This was a complex project with an excellent staff that successfully implemented the Project's objectives. All three objectives were completed with the final outcome being a plan for the Ojibwe Interpretive Center. The first objective involved establishing an organizational framework to start project planning. This initial objective was more time consuming than expected because the Tribe went through significant leadership changes at the same time this Project was funded. As a result, the Project's focus was expanded to include contemporary and traditional elements of Tribal culture.

The purpose of the second objective was to gather information, conduct general research, go on site visits and complete initial reviews with a focus group. First,

staff members developed a survey tool to gain input and community support for the Project. Next, other interpretive centers were visited. These site visits were beneficial for two main reasons. First, they enabled the team to learn from the other centers. Also, the visits helped the grantee develop partnerships with entities whose knowledge and experiences were exceptional resources for project staff. Following these visits, a draft plan was created. With a draft plan in place, Project staff was able to gather more ideas and input from the community. The grantee conducted a total of 15 meetings with over 50 elders in attendance at each meeting to strengthen the plan. Following these site visits and meetings, the Project staff was able to complete an initial design for the Ojibwe Interpretive Center.

The last objective concentrated on economic factors that would impact the Center. This objective included determining the target audience, location of the Center and facilities that should be in the Center.

A market analysis that included research on the target audience and sustainability was conducted and a feasibility statement was written. Information was gathered from the site visits and Tribal businesses as well as from other attractions in the area. It appears that the work done by the Project staff, committees and community will carry the Ojibwe Interpretive Center into its next stage: building.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe has benefited from the work that went into creating a plan for the Ojibwe Interpretive Center. One of the greatest impacts was the number of partnerships, and thus new resources, the Tribe attracted. The partnerships were integral to completing all aspects of this

Project and will continue to be available for the Tribe and Center.

Many Tribal members from youth to elders became involved with the development of the plans for the Center. A survey was used to obtain community input. The Tribal Board of Directors was able to be involved with project planning. In addition, the Tribal Cultural Division gained a wealth of knowledge from site visits as well as from the community's feedback. The Project has united people and brought pride to the community.

The community clearly supported the Project. Community members are looking forward to the Center becoming a space to teach, learn and celebrate their culture. One elder stated that it was her "dream for the Center to be a place to keep and protect the Tribe's artifacts." Her grandmother started and did not finish a pair of moccasins that she would like to know will be preserved for future generations. Another tribal member stated, "The elders' participation was a highlight. They don't beat around the bush, they know what they want. The Center is a plus-plus for the community." The Project Director concluded, "Our community really feels a sense of belonging, and the Center will be a draw just like our drum which we call the heartbeat of Mother Earth."