
ALLIANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS



Project Title:	Wicoie Nandagikendan Urban Immersion Nests Project
Award Amount:	\$748,861
Type of Grant:	Native Languages
Project Period:	Sept. 2009 – Sept. 2012
Grantee Type:	Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 7 full-time equivalent jobs created
- 12 Elders involved
- 762 youth involved
- \$174,302 in resources leveraged
- 23 individuals trained
- 17 partnerships formed
- 52 youth increased their ability to speak a Native language
- 20 adults increased their ability to speak a Native language

BACKGROUND

The Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals (AECF) is a statewide nonprofit organization committed to improving wages and working conditions for early childhood professionals. Started in 1979, the organization advocates for professionals to ensure proper care and education for young children. The Alliance also is a founding member of the Dakota Ojibwe Language Revitalization Alliance (DOLRA), a network of Elders, educators, first speakers, and language activists who work to develop resources and implement

strategies to preserve the Native Dakota and Ojibwe languages.

In 2006, AECF created the Wicoie Nandagikendan Urban Indian Preschool Program in partnership with DOLRA. The program provides an immersion language learning experience for students in the Minneapolis Public School system, and operates at three sites. Two are at the Anishinabe Academy magnet school, where AECF provides 540 hours of immersion per year. The third site is the Four Directions Center, where AECF provides 750 hours of immersion per year.

The program has a successful track record of producing speakers and improving children's overall academic performance; however, over the past few years, a dramatic increase in enrollment created a strain on AECF's resources. This project was created to help Wicoie successfully manage growth while continuing to provide high quality services.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The project purpose was to expand the preschool program's capacity to provide a challenging and stimulating learning environment. AECF also aimed to secure

long-term financial stability of the program. The first objective was to expand teachers' skills, and enhance classroom equipment and curriculum. Wicoie used a team-teaching model for immersion instruction: the classrooms at Anishinabe had two language speakers paired with a Minneapolis School System teacher, and the classroom at Four Directions had three language speakers. These speakers and teachers completed 120 hours of immersion-based child development training each year to increase expertise in both Native languages and immersion teaching methods.

Wicoie also purchased interactive learning tools, such as a wigwam and a portable planetarium, to complement lessons in environmental science and astronomy. Staff developed curriculum for use in the planetarium based on Ojibwe and Dakota traditional star knowledge. Project staff also developed and translated 40 books, as well as six new learning games and six DVDs.

In addition to the classroom work, AECF held an annual immersion camp for students and adults. Over 140 students and 50 community members attended the camps, and learned Dakota and Ojibwe language through hoop dancing, archery, storytelling, games, food tasting, drums, and dancing. The camp was 3 weeks long in the first year, and 1 week in the second and third years.

The second objective was to increase parental and community involvement in the immersion school by engaging them in language activities. These strategies included moccasin games, bingo, seasonal feasts, and family nights. At family nights, parents were given tools to incorporate what students were learning in the classroom into life at home, such as vocabulary lists and labels for household items. Several parents also attended immersion weekend camps in Dakota and Ojibwe, where participants spoke the languages for 14 hours each day.

The third objective was to ensure the sustainability of the program. AECF made progress in solidifying several funding sources, including charging a nominal tuition fee to some parents, facilitating scholarships from local Tribes, enrolling on the online giving platform GiveMN.org, and meeting with over 30 potential donors. The project director also hired a marketing consultant, who developed promotional materials and the organization's first annual report to distribute to parents, teachers, and potential donors.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

In 3 years, nearly 800 children, parents, and community members participated in the immersion program by attending class, training, or immersion camps. In addition, 52 youth and 20 adults increased their ability to speak Ojibwe and Dakota. Many parents witnessed an increase of language use in their children and themselves attributed to Wicoie. As one parent shared, "I probably would have left the Twin Cities if it weren't for this program." Additionally, children in the program experienced a new sense of self-awareness and pride, improved academic performance, and became more active participants in school.

The wider Ojibwe and Dakota community also has a renewed sense of pride and hope as they see children speaking their Native language. As one teacher said, "If we revitalize our language, we revitalize our people." Another participant believes the language contains an oral history of his people: "The language tells us who we are, where we came from, and if we're lucky, where we are going."

AECF will continue the preschool immersion program, and work with DOLRA to plan a new kindergarten through third grade immersion charter school to open in Minneapolis within the next few years.

GREATER MINNEAPOLIS COUNCIL OF CHURCHES



Project Title:	First Language Project
Award Amount:	\$381,155
Type of Grant:	Native Languages
Project Period:	Sept. 2009 – Sept. 2012
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 3 full-time equivalent jobs created
- 11 Native American consultants hired
- 40 Elders involved
- 325 youth involved
- \$28,545 in resources leveraged
- 4 partnerships formed
- 212 youth increased their ability to speak a Native language
- 9 adults increased their ability to speak a Native language

BACKGROUND

The Division of Indian Work (DIW), part of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, was founded in 1952 in response to an influx of Native American families to the Minneapolis area as a result of government relocation programs. These families arrived facing a lack of affordable housing, employment opportunities, and culturally appropriate social services.

DIW works to fill these gaps with the mission of “empowering American Indian people through culturally-based education, counseling, advocacy, and leadership development.” As part of its work, DIW

offers an after-school Youth Leadership Development Program, which works with youth from the urban Indian communities of Powderhorn and Phillips in Minneapolis. Stemming from the circumstances and poor conditions in which their parents and grandparents arrived to the area, Native youth are much more likely than their non-Native counterparts to be involved with child protective services, the juvenile court system, or to engage in high risk behaviors. At the same time, these youth are detached from Native culture and their ancestral language.

Recognizing these risks, DIW saw the need for programs that create a strong sense of self and cultural identity using language. DIW conducted a survey of families which revealed support for after-school language programs for youth beyond second grade, yet none existed in Minneapolis.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the First Language Project was to provide culturally-relevant, intergenerational Ojibwe language instruction as a part of after-school and summer activities for youth ages 7-17. The project’s objective was to provide experiential language instruction in beginning and intermediate conversational

Ojibwe to 300 youth through cultural and recreational activities. These activities included language sessions, seasonal family feasts, and sweat lodge ceremonies.

Since no appropriate language curriculum existed, language consultants and project staff developed and integrated a curriculum into DIW's existing after-school activities. The three-level curriculum covers common phrases, vocabulary on traditional items, and grammar patterns. Project staff also developed teaching aids and materials such as pictures, vocabulary cards, and games to supplement the curriculum.

For example, one type of teaching tool that became very popular were wrist bracelets, given to students as they progressed in language learning. These specially-made bracelets contained words or phrases in Ojibwe, and students earned a bracelet for learning the word or phrase and demonstrating its use. In total, 212 students built their language skills through completion of the after-school and summer programs.

In addition to the language classes, many youth participated through social events, such as seasonal family feasts. After gaining popularity through networking with other organizations and word of mouth, the feasts became a huge success; 300 family members attended the four feasts held in the project's final year. DIW served traditional food, and youth who participated in the Ojibwe language program were invited to say the prayer for the food in Ojibwe; six students stepped forward with no hesitation and started the prayer.

One of the most challenging—yet impactful—parts of the project was educating and providing an experience of sweat lodge ceremonies. It was difficult to find youth to participate and people to host sweats; many families preferred to perform sweats on their own. To overcome this

challenge, project staff educated all students about sweat lodge ceremonies, including the use of medicines and Native language in the ceremony. Additionally, 26 percent of the youth attended at least one sweat.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The project provided increased learning opportunities for some of the Minneapolis Public Schools district's most at-risk students. The district also gained a new Native language curriculum and learning model for students in grades 2-12. Further, the curriculum lessons and materials will inform a Dakota and Ojibwe K-3 immersion program for a newly-authorized Minneapolis chartered public school in 2014. DIW also earned a grant from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council to continue the First Language Project.

Furthermore, the youth who participated in this project exceeded many benchmarks for language learning. Ninety-three percent learned to fully introduce themselves with their name, Indian name, clan, and where they are from, a 24 percent increase over original projections. At the beginning of the project, a large number of students did not know their clan and had to learn to say in Ojibwe, "I'm still searching for my clan." By the project's end, most learned their clan and developed a deeper connection to the tribe in the process, fostering a stronger sense of self.

The impact on the students as a result of cultural events was significant as well. Many youth participated in traditional dances for the first time. According to the project's language coordinator, many youth see committing a crime as a rite of passage, but the sweats became a healthy alternative. Many of the boys who participated left feeling they "became a man," and youth reported a stronger connection to cultural identity.

PRAIRIE ISLAND INDIAN COMMUNITY



Project Title:	Establishing a Tribal Historic Preservation Office
Award Amount:	\$188,280
Type of Grant:	Environmental
Project Period:	Sept. 2010 – Dec. 2012
Grantee Type:	Tribe

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 1 full-time equivalent job created
- 6 Elders involved
- 200 youth involved
- \$20,000 in resources leveraged
- 21 individuals trained
- 6 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Prairie Island Indian Community (PIIC) is a federally recognized Native American Tribe with approximately 800 enrolled members. Its reservation is located 35 miles southeast of the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, on an island at the convergence of the Mississippi and Vermillion Rivers.

There are hundreds of culturally and historically significant locations, such as burial mounds and habitation sites, within a 10-mile radius of PIIC. Although some of these have been recorded and mapped, many are threatened by land development due to lack of awareness and of preservation laws. Unprotected sites risk being damaged or destroyed; farming, construction, and past archaeological investigations have altered and even destroyed countless sites on the island.

Additionally, PIIC has inventoried populations of plant species used for traditional and medicinal purposes; traditional vegetation should be protected and, in some cases, re-established.

Without a recognized Tribal department tasked with preservation, or an organized system for gathering and using data, the Tribe is unable to effectively document, manage, and protect its sites and resources.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to develop the self-governance capabilities of PIIC to protect and preserve Tribal cultural resources by establishing a Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO). Under a THPO, the Tribe will have the same authority as a federal agency to manage these sites.

The project's first objective was to develop a Tribal cultural resource database that contains all documents and maps related to the cultural history of the Prairie Island area. Project staff developed forms for documenting the coordinates, size, and ownership of cultural sites, as well as artifacts discovered at each sites. Over the course of the project, staff identified and catalogued 21 locations on the PIIC

reservation and eight more on the property of a nearby energy plant. Working with PIIC's Land and Environment Department, project staff also developed GIS maps to plot sites and medicinal plants.

The project's second objective was to develop partnerships with key community, state, and federal stakeholders in cultural preservation, as well as implement an education and outreach program. The Tribe succeeded in partnering with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, the Minnesota Office of the State Archaeologist, the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, and Bureau of Indian Affairs archaeology staff. The Tribe also liaised with THPOs from other Native American communities to gain insight into starting and running a THPO. In addition, the project director met with a number of Elders to seek expertise.

To educate community members about the project, staff circulated information via the Tribe's newsletter and during the Tribe's annual Public Safety Day, attended by 200 youth. In addition, 20 PIIC youth participated in a field school experience with an archaeologist from Minnesota University, where students examined burial mounds and artifacts.

The project's third objective was to develop a THPO that meets the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Act empowers federally recognized Tribes to assume all or any part of the functions of a State Historic Preservation Office with respect to Tribal lands. After the project began, project staff realized additional time was necessary for THPO application; as a result, staff requested and received a 3-month no-cost extension (NCE). By the end of the NCE period, the THPO application was successfully developed and submitted.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Tribe already has made important contributions to cultural preservation. In one case, the Tribe was able to repatriate remains using new site forms; an Elder assisted in the repatriation and burial, which was attended by many people including staff from the local power plant. In addition, some Tribal members are currently working with THPO staff to locate lost relatives and learn lineage and family history.

Furthermore, the Tribe has become formally involved in local planning and development projects, such as the expansion of roads and increasing the number of pastures for buffalo grazing.

Once the THPO is formally established, the Tribe will have the legal authority to oversee development and protection of historical sites on Tribal lands and outside groups, such as developers and government agencies, will have a mandated point-of-contact with whom to work. This is especially important for instances such as when remains are found off the reservation.

With the data from the GIS maps available, project staff aims to develop a preservation plan to be used as a stand-alone document or in conjunction with a future land use plan.

As preservation efforts expand, Tribal staff are considering developing a Tribal museum to house artifacts and historical pieces. The Tribe will continue to support the Tribal Preservation Officer position, and as an official THPO the office will be eligible for federal funds.

The immediate and long-term impacts of these efforts on the community are poignant. According to one Tribal staff member, "The community has a better sense that somebody is watching over their ancestors, their sites."