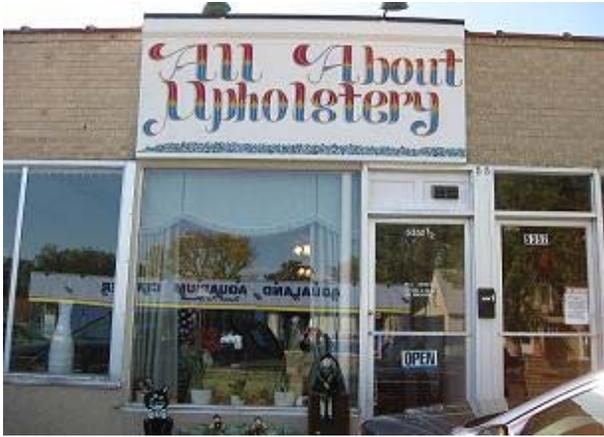

AMERICAN INDIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND



Project Title:	Phase II Expansion of American Indian Entrepreneur Training and Small Business Development Services
Award Amount:	\$302,500
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2007 – Sept. 2008
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 3 jobs created
- 8 businesses created
- 1 Native American consultant hired
- 6 elders involved
- \$256,263 in resources leveraged
- 90 individuals trained
- 98 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The American Indian Economic Development Fund (AIEDF) was established in 1992 as a regional nonprofit organization located in St. Paul, Minnesota. AIEDF provides revitalization to American Indian families and communities by assisting native entrepreneurs (Indianpreneurs) and small businesses to develop and expand successful community-based small businesses. AIEDF provides culturally relevant training, one-on-one business development assistance to small business owners, gap-funding in the form of loans, and support during the loan process.

Native Americans have a low small business ownership rate compared to other ethnic groups, and the average unemployment rate on reservations in the region is 23%, much higher than the national average. Barriers to owning a business include a lack of collateral, poor communication from the financial community, and rigid banking rules often unfavorable to Native Americans. The demand for AIEDF's services has more than doubled in the past two years with the introduction of the new culturally relevant curriculum and the availability of additional loan funds, therefore the organization would like to expand its service area.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project was to expand AIEDF's service area outside of Minnesota into the five-state area to be able to implement a culturally appropriate training model of business development services. The project replicated the model in Wisconsin, Michigan, North Dakota, South Dakota, and additional areas in Minnesota.

The project's first objective was to facilitate the creation of six businesses by providing training to 100 Indian-preneurs over the course of the 12-month project period. AIEDF conducted training for 85 entrepreneurs in the expanded service area with the exception of South Dakota. Over the course of the project, AIEDF also provided intensive assistance to nineteen start-up businesses, which resulted in the creation of eight new businesses during the project.

The project's second objective was to stabilize and expand at least 25 existing businesses in the extended service area through intensive one-on-one assistance. Businesses in the area were struggling due to the nation's economic downturn, causing challenges for implementing this objective as most owners could not afford any sort of expansion. AIEDF therefore focused on business stabilization, and provided assistance to 21 pre-existing businesses. This took the form of account balancing, loan consolidation, training in accounting software, and tax support.

Objective three was to increase AIEDF's organizational capacity to support the expansion of their service area. AIEDF modified its organizational structure to allow for increased efficiency and a more balanced workload for employees. Project staff developed new policies and procedures for the headquarters office, reassigned client profiles to better fit employees' backgrounds, and redefined staff roles and responsibilities. The organization is also hoping to hire new staff in the upcoming months.

The project experienced a variety of challenges. Project staff was unable to conduct trainings in South Dakota due to recruiting difficulties. The economic downturn and increased fuel costs caused fewer participants to attend the trainings.

Finally, project staff sometimes faced difficulties in working with struggling tribal communities where business development is not the tribal government's top priority.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Students who participated in the Indian-preneur training gained the skills necessary to start their own businesses, helping them secure their future and achieve their goals. Many participants began training assuming they were not capable of becoming business owners, but gained the confidence needed to pursue their goals.

The project developed 98 partnerships with local businesses and organizations, many of which are non-native owned. This increases awareness in the non-Indian community as to the success of native businesses.

AIEDF expanded its service area during the project, increasing the organization's management capacity. Staff members experience personal gratification when their clients succeed in establishing or expanding native-owned businesses, as the increased economic self-sufficiency will carry over into future generations.

“AIEDF helped, because I wouldn't have had any idea how to approach a bank. AIEDF helped me secure a loan.”

Michael Carney, Business Owner

GREATER MINNEAPOLIS COUNCIL OF CHURCHES



Project Title:	Healthy Native Fathers Project
Award Amount:	\$459,128
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies – Family Preservation
Project Period:	Sept. 2005 – Sept. 2008
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 7 jobs created
- 1 Native American consultant hired
- 4 elders involved
- \$35,157 in resources leveraged
- 7 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

Established in 1905, the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches (GMCC) is a nonprofit organization that operates social service programs serving Minnesota families. The Division of Indian Work is a program within the GMCC focused specifically on serving the American Indian population living in the Minneapolis area. The Division provides parenting classes, family counseling, tutoring and cultural activities to urban Indian families.

Native Americans in Minneapolis face numerous challenges to creating strong families. The majority of children grow up in single parent households and 88% of births to American Indians in Minneapolis are to unmarried women. Families often have trouble achieving self-sufficiency,

which is made more difficult by high rates of chemical dependency, domestic violence, unemployment, and lack of education. While a fair amount of services exist for mothers in the community, there is a lack of services for Native fathers.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project was to improve the well-being of Native American children by increasing the self-sufficiency of native fathers. The project focused on improving fathers' relationship, parenting, and life skills.

The first objective was to implement off-site programming at high schools and correctional facilities. Project staff originally intended to hold parenthood group sessions at local correctional facilities, but the meetings transformed into support groups for fathers instead. After a few months the focus shifted entirely, and the project staff no longer held the sessions. Project staff did not organize any classes at the local high schools; however the Teen Indian Parents Program developed a Strengthening Family Circles group independent of the project.

The project's second objective focused on holding fathers group meetings and classes at the Division of Indian Work. Staff members aimed to hold seventeen sessions each of the three project years with ten, fifteen, and then twenty participants respectively. On average, twelve meetings occurred each year, with a core group of five fathers attending all sessions. In the first year of the project, meeting discussions focused more on responding to immediate crisis situations. As the meetings progressed in subsequent years, participants spoke more about the general role of fathers in children's lives. The meetings also followed a parenting curriculum that focused on life skills and healthy relationships.

The project's third objective was to organize four family nights and six family outings each year. Family nights began as lecture-style meetings; however project staff found that a setting involving cultural activities and using the talking circle format were better attended. Project staff collaborated with the Goodwill EasterSeals Fathers Project for many of the family outings. Family nights and outings included picnics, canoeing trips, and guest speaker sessions. On average, there were eight family nights and eight family outings each year.

Objective four was to develop pre- and post-tests designed for project participants in order to promote program development and improvement. Project staff contracted consultants to develop the tests, which staff members used to assess participants' skill retention during the fathers group classes. Test results indicated a need for increased job training, sessions on how to navigate the legal system, and GED classes, which project staff addressed in their partnership with the Goodwill EasterSeals Father Project.

The project also included an objective in the third year to establish five new partnerships

in order to provide referrals to clients. At the close of the project, GMCC strengthened partnerships with organizations such as Goodwill EasterSeals, First Nations Recovery Center, American Indian Services, and the American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center. GMCC formed a total of seven partnerships during the project.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

This project enabled fathers to augment their parenting knowledge through the parenting curriculum, leading to improved relationships with their children. One father mentioned he feels he is an "improved citizen" due to increased cultural knowledge. The project also developed an increased and improved support system for native fathers, and they now have access to more resources.

GMCC increased its capacity to provide more in-house services, reducing the amount of necessary referrals given to clients. The project allowed the organization to grow, and helped solidify its place in the community. The new partnerships also serve as mutually beneficial relationships, as Goodwill EasterSeals also improved its service delivery.

Prior to this project, there were no services available for native fathers in the community. As a result of GMCC's work, fatherhood is becoming a more popular issue for the urban Indian population in Minneapolis. Due to their success, GMCC continues to offer the father's group and family nights.

"More fathers are employed, more are receiving services, and more are learning the culture."

Suzanne Tibbetts Young,
Project Director

RED LAKE BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS



Project Title:	Red Lake Tribal Youth Initiative
Award Amount:	\$449,686
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	August 2005 – April 2008
Grantee Type:	Tribe

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 2 jobs created
- 20 Native American consultants hired
- 400 elders involved
- 1,200 youth involved
- 2,960 individuals trained
- 11 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Red Lake Reservation is located in the northwest corner of Minnesota, approximately 160 miles from the Canadian border. The reservation is 1,259 square miles in total area and most residents live in rural areas. Approximately 90% of Red Lake's entire population is low income, and the school district suffers from a 20% drop-out rate.

Red Lake Reservation is comprised of four communities, namely Red Lake, Redby, Little Rock and Ponemah, each of which has a community center where activities are held for community members, including the tribal youth. There is, however, a significant lack of structured or organized activities for youth currently in existence in Red Lake. The school provides limited activities during

the academic year. The community centers are also in a state of disrepair and require renovations, alterations, and additions.

The above needs, along with the 2005 tragedy that occurred at the Red Lake High School, emphasize the necessity for structured, organized activities and opportunities for the students and youth living in and around the Red Lake Reservation.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project was to provide safe, organized, structured and supervised activities and opportunities for the youth in the reservation's four communities. A large portion of the project focused on providing minor renovations to each community center in order to better accommodate youth and community activities.

The project's first objective was to renovate or provide additions to the community centers and gather donated items for use in each center. Each community individually bid out the work and selected a board to oversee the renovations. The work on each community center was completed, and included new kitchen facilities, plumbing and paint. Unfortunately, an anticipated

partnership with a national nonprofit organization to provide in-kind equipment for the centers did not materialize. Consequently, project staff bought equipment from the Tribe and developed a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of America for any remaining items.

Objective two focused on hiring two school counselors to be placed in the Red Lake middle and high schools to assist students during the school year and to supervise summer youth activities. Project staff hired two wellness counselors at the beginning of the project's second year that provided school and home counseling and worked with youth during the summer months. The counselors proved to be successful in their efforts, as students eagerly took advantage of their services. Both counselors have a tribal cultural background and desire to continue providing counseling services for tribal youth on the reservation.

Objective three sought to provide Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) to high school students. The school board fully supported the training and stated that participants would earn a quarter of a credit towards their graduation requirements. The training occurred during the summer of 2007 and included 120 participants.

Objective four was to recruit and hire eleven youth volunteers through the AmeriCorps Program to provide tutoring assistance to students, develop first responder skills and form volunteer groups to assist the Tribe. Project staff hired the eleven volunteers who then received training in a variety of subjects such as life skills, conflict resolution, tribal history, teambuilding, tutor training, first aid training and first responder training. The first responder training was well attended and became a source of potential employees for the Tribe's EMT program.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

This project provided critical counseling services to youth in the Red Lake community in the aftermath of the tragic shooting that took place on the Reservation in 2005. Over 1,200 youth participated in the project. The project empowered youth by providing them with unique training, skills and counseling. Roxanne May, the AmeriCorps assistant director stated, "This project is healing and mending the spirits of the youth in the community and promoting general wellness." In addition, there is new job potential for high school graduates through the Tribe's EMT program.

The project provided elders with services which increased their independent living skills. Tribal members can now participate in activities to assist the community. The upgraded facilities in the community centers, combined with the new provision of activities and events, promote pride in the Tribe's culture and history, and increase community cohesion.

The Red Lake school system benefited greatly from the project. Teachers are more involved in the community as they now have a greater sense of safety. Many of the teachers are non-native, and now have a greater understanding of the community and its culture. There has also been a decrease in youth suicides on the reservation, indicating the impact of having two counselors on staff. The School administrators are very happy with the service and hope it will continue.

UPPER SIOUX COMMUNITY



Project Title:	Upper Sioux Community Telecommunication Project
Award Amount:	\$180,613
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2007 – Sept. 2008
Grantee Type:	Tribe

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 1 job created
- \$1,515 in revenue generated
- 1 individual trained
- 6 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Upper Sioux Community (USC), a federally recognized tribe established in 1938, has a current land base of 1,440 acres. The reservation is located near Granite Falls in southwestern Minnesota. The Tribe has approximately 216 members living on the reservation in 54 households and 482 total members.

Currently, there are limited telecommunication services on the reservation due to a lack of infrastructure and limited investments from local service providers. There is not a provider willing to invest in bringing the needed infrastructure for broadband and other technological enhancements to such a remote area. The tribal community therefore suffers from a lack of access to opportunities such as distance learning. Communication between the various tribal government departments is also inefficient.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the overall five-stage telecommunications project is to establish a tribally owned and operated telecommunications business and to provide improved services to the tribal population.

The objective for the fourth project stage was to connect fiber optic cable to all 54 reservation households and the network operating center, providing the necessary infrastructure for voice, data, and video broadband services. Results and benefits for this objective included establishing connections to the University of Minnesota network and other higher education institutions to provide distance learning opportunities for tribal members.

The building designated to house the network operating center was not yet complete, so the center is currently located in an older building and will be transferred in March 2009. Project staff distributed letters to the 54 households to determine the interest level for having home Internet connections, and received 30 positive responses. The next step involved physically connecting the households to the fiber optic network.

The network administrator collaborated with a local engineering firm to develop maps for the proposed power grid. A telecom construction company completed all the trenching and buried the fiber cables. The network administrator then wired all 54 homes and circulated letters to tribal members informing them of the availability of Internet connections.

The Tribe offers three “fiber optic to the premises” (FTTP) packages, each priced differently according to the speed of the connection, beginning at \$25 per month. At the close of the project, fourteen homes had Internet connections. Tribal offices connected to the network will be charged per workstation, the proceeds of which will then cover the operation costs. Until this time, the IT department is covering the costs, as the revenue from the fourteen homes is not sufficient. The project worked with a lawyer to develop an ordinance for Internet subscribers, establishing policies and procedures for payment collection.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Prior to this project, it cost approximately \$1,000 per home to install a wireless Internet connection, as each household had to build a tower. Tribal members now have a much more affordable option. Along with the luxury of improved technology, community members also experience increased communication capabilities and access to outside resources.

The Tribe benefits financially, as they previously paid for the costs of copper connection lines while the new fiber electronics are free. Once installed, the new tribal department Internet connections will be much faster and therefore more efficient. The new system is also more reliable than other connections.

The final stage of the telecommunications project involves completing the business

plan for the tribal telecom company and creating the business structure.

The new building designated to house the network operating center will include electronic classrooms. Once the building is complete, the University of Minnesota plans to launch instructional television (ITV) classes in the Dakota language.

“Community members now have affordable Internet that also financially supports the Tribe.”

Brian Schulte, Network Administrator