
FORT BELKNAP COMMUNITY COUNCIL



Project Title: Pride of the Little Rockies
Award Amount: \$450,000
Type of Grant: Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period: 9/30/2004 – 9/29/2006
Grantee Type: Tribe

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 6 jobs created
- 8 people trained
- 5 partnerships formed
- 1 product developed

BACKGROUND

The Fort Belknap Indian Community was created in 1888 as a permanent home for the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre people on 724,147 acres of land along the Little Rocky Mountain range in northern Montana. The reservation is 40 miles south of the Canadian border. The current tribal population is 6,427 enrolled members. Due in part to its extreme isolation, the reservation has suffered from very high unemployment rates. The Bureau of Indian Affairs calculates the current unemployment rate at 70 percent. Most of the available jobs stem directly from government-funded programs or are seasonal in nature, such as firefighting. Tribal members also have an extremely low per capita income (\$8,150).

The tribal community has battled high poverty and unemployment rates for years. During the Strategic Planning session held in 2002, community members cited economic development as the most important priority for the future. The Tribal

Council recognized the value that an infusion of economic development could bring to the community.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Tribe owns a 14,000 acre pasture where 600 head of bison graze. The Tribe also owns the Little Rockies Meat Packing plant. After the meat is processed at the plant, prime cuts are sold to an outside source to produce jerky and sausages. The purpose of the Pride of the Little Rockies (Project) was to establish a tribally-owned smokehouse that could utilize this meat supply to produce sausages, pepper sticks and jerky. The Tribe planned to renovate space in a shopping mall for the smokehouse. This project supported the goals of the Tribe's economic development strategy by attempting to create more economic opportunities for tribal members.

The Project was beset with delays from its outset. Initially, the Project experienced a delay, since a potential investor failed to provide promised support. Working out a favorable solution put the Project behind schedule eight months.

The first objective for the Project was to create eight to ten jobs within six months of start-up. This objective was completed, however, not within the original timeframe.

The Project trained eight people and created the equivalent of six full time jobs.

The second objective was to renovate space in a local shopping mall into a processing area and office space for the Pride of the Little Rockies Smokehouse. After resolving the initial delay, renovations began. However, the Project director became very ill and was forced to resign. A new director with considerable managerial skill was hired and worked hard to get the Project back on schedule. Approximately three months after he was hired, the Project had progressed from the renovation stage to the production stage. The smokehouse and office space was fully functioning as of October 2006.

The third objective was to establish a tribally-owned smokehouse to produce products using locally-raised bison and beef with access to additional bison from the member tribes of the Inter-Tribal Bison Cooperative (ITBC) of South Dakota. There is no signed agreement between the smokehouse and the ITBC due to start-up delays. However, now that the smokehouse is in production, the Project's director has regular communications with the director of the ITBC.

The last objective was to develop a marketing plan for the smokehouse's products. A marketing plan has been developed and packaging labels are in the process of being approved by the United States Department of Agriculture. Price plans have been developed that incorporate a desirable profit margin.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The Project's biggest impact has been on smokehouse employees. Working at the smokehouse has meant more than being able to provide for their families. The skills that they have learned have given them a sense of pride and accomplishment. The general

manager reports that two or three people a week request jobs.

The local community has also benefited from the Project by having the option of a healthy snack alternative. The jerky has been popular with community members. This community, like most Native communities, is struggling with the health concerns associated with diabetes. The Project director explained buffalo were once a main staple food for his people. He stated, "The more we got away from that the worse it's been." It is his vision that the products he makes at the smokehouse will play an integral role in helping to restore health to his community.

"The community is excited. There's a sense of pride in what we're doing here. Everyone is excited about the Project."

Tribal Member

NATIONAL TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION



Project Title: American Indian Youth Entrepreneurial Project

Award Amount: \$342,430

Type of Grant: Social and Economic Development Strategies

Project Period: 9/30/2004 – 9/29/2006

Grantee Type: Native Non-Profit

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 2 jobs created
- \$75,000 in leveraged resources
- 2 Native youth trained
- 5 partnerships formed
- 2 products developed
- 3 Native American consultants hired
- 5 elders involved
- 25 youth involved

BACKGROUND

The National Tribal Development Association (NTDA) provides economic development and governance services to its member tribes. Since its inception, the organization has been committed to understanding the needs of Indian communities and offering relevant services to meet those needs. The Association works with tribes from across the country with the hope of bringing long-term solutions to many of the challenges faced by tribal nations such as high unemployment rates, poverty and poor infrastructure. NTDA services range from marketing Native crops in international markets to creating universal commercial codes for Native nations. In the 11 years since its inception, NTDA has grown from 15 to 38 member Tribes.

The National Farm Services Agency American Indian Credit Outreach Initiative, an NTDA program, works to ensure that Natives in the lower 48 states can access credit through the United States Department of Agriculture. As NTDA worked with Native Americans through its Credit Outreach Program, it became apparent that youth who are eligible to receive small business loans needed help developing their loan packages. Specifically, the youth needed assistance creating a feasible business plan. Out of that need, the American Indian Youth Entrepreneurial Empowerment Project was born.

PURPOSE OF THE GRANT

The American Indian Youth Entrepreneurial Project was envisioned to be a web-based interactive forum where young Native entrepreneurs could gather to share success stories, business ideas and chat with current Indian business owners. In the first year, the Project was also slated to create a culturally-appropriate curriculum to teach the youth about business plans, credit history, records management and customer service. The curriculum would then be posted on the website to reach a maximum number of Native youth. In the final year, the Project planned to make presentations of the developed curriculum at conferences and partner sites.

The first Project objective was to develop, test and refine an entrepreneurship/financial literacy curriculum aimed specifically at Native American and Alaskan Native youth. The curriculum was to be posted on the website so that youth could browse through different topics and learn basic business skills. The Project coordinator was able to create some basic business information titled “Youth Entrepreneurship” which was used to educate some youth. Some of the topics covered in the packet include: handling money, setting financial goals, and managing credit wisely. A consultant, Stone Child Tribal College, was eventually hired to develop the curriculum, but the finished product was not expected until months after the grant’s completion date.

The second objective was to develop and implement an interactive website for Native youth which would present the developed curriculum and launch the planned 24-hour chat room. The website was to be up and running within the first quarter of the Project. Due to technical difficulties and the fact that the curriculum was not ready, the website was not posted until the final month of the Project. Unfortunately, the chat feature was never implemented and the business curriculum was not referenced online either.

The third objective was to present a scaled down version of the curriculum at a minimum of five major conferences attracting Native youth and to make at least 24 presentations at partner sites throughout the 28 service delivery areas. The third objective was never attempted because the curriculum was not finished.

The original project proposal underestimated the time and skills required to create a complete entrepreneurial guide for Native youth. Since the objectives were dependent on curriculum development, the Project’s success was greatly hindered by the failure

to develop the material. Unfortunately, this project did not complete most of the outcomes it expected since an entrepreneurial/financial literacy curriculum was not developed or posted to the website, youth did not receive the planned assistance in completing business plans/loan applications and planned presentations were not made at partner sites to promote the new curriculum.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The youth business curriculum has the potential to greatly impact Native American youth throughout the country. It is hoped that the valuable work that was initiated during the two-year timeframe of the Project will be continued and adopted by the organization as an additional service to its members.

NEW DAY, INC.



Project Title:	Four Dances Outdoor Adventure
Award Amount:	\$744,170
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	9/30/2004 – 9/29/2006
Grantee Type:	Native Non-Profit

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 12 jobs created
- \$337,389 in resources leveraged
- 19 people trained
- 10 partnerships formed
- 3 products developed
- 1 Native American consultant hired
- 12 elders involved
- 59 youth involved

BACKGROUND

Since its formation in 1996, New Day, Inc. has established itself as a premier mental health care provider for Native American youth in the states of Montana and Wyoming. It offers mental health services that help emotionally disturbed youth return to a healthy and stable lifestyle in their communities. The New Day services range from mental health to chemical dependency rehabilitation and have been adapted to incorporate the healing aspects of the Native American culture. The pressures of limited employment and the associated poverty frequently found in Native American communities can often result in Native American youth struggling with mental health related problems.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

One of the challenges New Day, Inc. has encountered while working with Native American youth in the Montana/Wyoming area has been the lack of culturally-appropriate curricula for mental health and chemical dependency issues. The purpose of this project was to create culturally-appropriate curricula for Native American youth that would help ease the stress and tension of being reintroduced to community life after the completion of a substance abuse program.

The first objective of this Project was to establish a professional staff and to form the New Day Inter-Tribal Advisory Council. The Council was to have representatives from the Montana and the Wyoming reservations and was to meet quarterly to review and refine the program model. This objective was completed. The Inter-Tribal Advisory Council has ten members: seven from tribes in Montana, two from tribes in Wyoming, and one urban member.

The second objective of this Project was to prepare and implement the Four Dances curricula and to provide services to 80 Native American youth in a 90-day treatment cycle. The curricula component of this objective was accomplished. The

program's curricula incorporate components of modern treatment methods with the traditional Plains Indian medicine wheel and outdoor elements. The program uses elements of nature including equine therapy, archery, sweat lodges and camping to teach the youth important life lessons. Based on feedback following the pilot program, the length of the treatment plan was reduced to 20 days. Instead of 80 youth participants only 20 were enrolled. When interviewed, the Project director noted, planning to serve 80 youth in a two-year period was overly ambitious.

The third objective was to conduct extensive marketing especially to tribes and agencies in Montana and Wyoming to foster awareness of the Four Dances program amongst those involved in youth treatment. This objective has been completed. The marketing manager reaches out to the Montana and Wyoming tribes through yearly site visits and regular phone calls.

Objective four was to disseminate the curricula and other valuable information to communities and other providers of children's mental health services, so the model might help serve as a catalyst for other culturally competent treatment programs. This objective has not been accomplished. The director and senior leadership shared their eagerness to disseminate the model; however, they want to make sure they have a solid product to offer before distribution. They are exploring avenues for sharing it.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The Four Dances Outdoor Adventure provides a very valuable service to Native American youth. Through the Project, the "Recovery Medicine Wheel" system was developed and then licensed by the Council on Accreditation, an international behavioral healthcare accreditation organization. The

"Recovery Medicine Wheel system incorporates modern and traditional Native American methods to help foster recovery in emotionally disturbed youth. To date, a total of 59 youth have been touched by the caring staff of Four Dances.

This Project has benefited Native American communities and families. The Native families and communities that send their youth to the program benefit by regaining stronger, more emotionally stable individuals. The program offers the Tribal communities the benefit of sending youth to a local treatment facility.

Long term benefits are also derived from the treatment model that was developed. By sharing and continuing to teach the "Recovery Medicine Wheel," the Project will impact the lives and communities of many more troubled youth. In April 2006, the program broke ground at the expansion site that will accommodate a larger number of participants. At the ribbon cutting ceremony, which was attended by many tribal, state and county leaders, the same sentiment united the crowd; "What you're doing here is crucial," said Major Robinson, Economic Development Specialist in Governor Schweitzer's office and a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.