
NEBRASKA INDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Project Title: Omaha Nation Language Project
Award Amount: \$61,350
Type of Grant: Language
Project Period: 9/30/2005 – 9/29/2006
Grantee Type: Tribal College

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 1 job created
- \$26,900 in resources leveraged
- 3 people trained
- 65 elders involved
- 33 youth involved
- 4 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Omaha Tribe of Nebraska is located on 64,000 acres of reservation land in the northeast corner of Nebraska. The Tribe has an enrolled membership of around 11,000 with 3,800 members residing in the town of Macy, Nebraska. Macy is the location of tribal headquarters. The reservation is isolated from large population centers. This isolation has served to preserve many of the cultural practices and traditions of the Omaha people. The language of the Omaha people is categorized as Dhegian, a division of the Siouan language stock.

The Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) was initially established in 1972 in Macy, Nebraska. In 1982, it was chartered as a non-profit organization. It provides higher education opportunities to the Omaha Tribe and the Santee Sioux and was responsible for the implementation of this

Project on behalf of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska.

Beginning in 1650 when traders first appeared, a steady stream of white culture flooded the Omaha people and thus their culture. In 1857, the arrival of a Presbyterian mission began a period of formal English teaching on Omaha lands that would continue for 30 years. From 1880 until 1940, United States law required Omaha children to be sent to government sponsored boarding schools to “become Americans.” Omaha language, dress, culture and religion were forbidden. Forced physical separation shattered cultural ties. Historical trends and the policies of assimilation led to the current status of the Omaha’s dying language.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Omaha Nation Language Project proposed to focus efforts on allowing the Omaha to recapture, renew and preserve their language.

The expectation of the Project was that there would be cooperation between the College's Project staff and the Omaha Tribal Council. However, the level of Council support often resulted in Project timelines not being met. By July 2006, NICC and Tribal Council still had not resolved Project scope and strategy. On-going and consistent presentations to the

Council had begun to show some breakthrough and progress, this challenge could not be overcome prior to the grant's completion. The original Project proposal seems to have been developed with minimal community involvement in its design and approach.

The original key objective was to develop and administer a comprehensive Omaha Language survey that would be used to plan, assess and develop Omaha Language goals. The Elders Council was instrumental in the draft survey's creation and on-going review. At the Project's conclusion, the Tribal Council had not yet approved an ordinance authorizing the survey (NICC was not aware that authorization was necessary when developing the original Project proposal). Overall, the Project had not completed any of its planned major activities by the completion date.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The opening of dialogue regarding the importance of language preservation has created positive impacts in the Omaha Nation. By NICC directive, the Omaha Elders Council has spearheaded this effort, and their involvement in Project implementation and survey development has served to emphasize the cultural preservation focus of this Project. The dialogue has begun to reap benefits in other Tribal relationships as well. The NICC's on-going presentations to Tribal Council on the Project's scope and support have created a foundation of mutual support for Omaha language preservation efforts between the two entities improving the potential for future collaboration and joint ventures.

This Project has also enjoyed some unintended benefits. The introduction of cultural preservation into the Elders Council has moved forward dormant efforts for Omaha sacred site preservation, including

efforts to reclaim the Omaha's traditional burial grounds and sacred pole. These discussions frequently take place in the Omaha language, spurring Project staff to begin recording and copying the conversations to DVD for posterity.

The Elders who spoke on the topic of the current Omaha language preservation efforts chose to highlight the discussions that have re-centered priorities upon the revitalization of Omaha culture.

"This project has brought us closer together as a people, and we are ready to act together for the good of our community."

Ed Cline
Former Tribal Chair

WINNEBAGO TRIBE OF NEBRASKA



Project Title: Winnebago Leadership Capacity Project
Award Amount: \$100,000
Type of Grant: Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period: 9/30/2005 – 9/29/2006
Grantee Type: Tribe

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 1 job created
- \$15,131 in resources leveraged
- 24 people trained
- 5 partnerships formed
- 20 youth involved
- 20 elders involved
- 2 Native American consultants hired

BACKGROUND

The Ho-Chunk Community Development Corporation (HCCDC) is a non-profit corporation serving the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska to raise the socio-economic and educational levels of its people. The Winnebago Tribe through its economic development arm, Ho-Chunk Inc., has emerged as a formidable economic force throughout the Midwest region. The economic and population growth on Winnebago reservation has transformed a traditionally depressed area into an environment ripe with opportunity. HCCDC administered this ANA Project on behalf of the Winnebago Tribe.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Economic and population growth poses a challenge to Tribal government and HCCDC. HCCDC considers the capacity-building of Winnebago leadership as the key ingredient to community and organizational success. Through the Winnebago Leadership Capacity Project, HCCDC hoped to emerge better equipped to serve the Winnebago community and to further their community vision.

The Project's first objective planned to involve at least 60 participants of the Winnebago community. They would help determine community needs, prioritize needs, and provide feedback about the types of leadership skills and training they felt were needed at Winnebago. To achieve this objective, Project staff held meetings in a talking circle format with four age groups of community members: 16 to 19, 20 to 34, 35 to 50, and 51+ years old. Four meetings were held with each age group to identify their desired social and economic development goals and to subsequently poll the attendees to establish clear priorities. A number of priority projects were identified and community assets that could be used in project development were documented. Following the success of the community

meetings, the Project offered an introductory leadership course to all attendees.

The Champion Community Benchmarks in the Winnebago's Community Strategic Plan were to be updated based on the priorities identified by the community. This part of the work plan has not yet been completed, although this activity will most likely become an on-going revision activity for HCCDC beyond the Project's conclusion.

The second objective planned to strengthen HCCDC's organizational capacity by providing professional development training and by conducting a Board of Directors and staff planning retreat. This objective was also achieved. Staff attended grant writing training and the Executive Director and the Director of Projects and Programs attended IEDC Economic Development Institute training. The retreat also occurred and new short and long-term HCCDC organizational goals were created using information from the training and community planning process results.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The Project positively impacted the HCCDC since it had identified long-term development plans as prioritized by its target audience: Winnebago Tribal members. HCCDC has committed itself to a process in which the beneficiaries of this project influence and share control over future development initiatives which affect them. HCCDC subsequently utilized these identified priorities by tailoring its capacity building and staff development efforts to more effectively realize the Winnebago Tribe's vision for its community and people.

Based upon conversations with community members, the introductory leadership class resulted in major attitudinal changes. Participants described a sense of

empowerment and optimism regarding their ability to effect change.

Community members made note of the optimism they now feel regarding their ability to effect change in their community and their ability to work cooperatively to resolve the problems facing Winnebago in this time of economic expansion and population growth. Elaine Rice attributed this to the structured deployment of the leadership training: "first, we analyzed past successful projects for ideas. We were then educated on resources available within our community and through funding agencies. Now we all have some ideas and are looking into organizing ourselves to create such things as a walking trail and a neighborhood watch." The Tribal membership is enjoying the first breaths of economic and social empowerment. Jack LaMere, an HCCDC Board Member and Winnebago elder concluded, "All members of our Tribe desire to be included in this period of growth and it will be a good thing to see what we can do when we build on these strengths. For now, we must concentrate on organizing ourselves and I believe this project has put us on that path."