

**INETNON AMOT YAN KUTTURAN NATIBU/MWIISCHIL SAFEY ME KKOOR
ARAMASAL FALUW**



Project Title:	Revitalization of Native Knowledge, Practices, and Resources and Enhancement of Native Culture
Award Amount:	\$480,881
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2010 – Sept. 2012
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 6 full-time equivalent jobs created
- 7 Native consultants hired
- 105 Elders involved
- 810 youth involved
- \$16,041 in resources leveraged
- 33 individuals trained
- 15 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

Incorporated in 2007, Inetnon Amot yan Kutturan Natibu/Mwiischil Safey me Kkoor Aramasal Faluw, or the Association of Native Medicine and Culture (the Association), is a nonprofit organization located in the unincorporated U.S. territory of Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The Association was established to revitalize the dying Carolinian and Chamorro cultural practice of Native medicine. In 2010, the Association changed its name and expanded its goals and objectives beyond the revitalization of Native medicine to include

addressing the high rate of social challenges caused by a lack of community-based social and economic programs. The Association’s current vision statement is: “Carolinians and Chamorros know about their culture and are able to practice traditional knowledge and skills in Native language, medicine, food, fishing, farming, land hunting, hut making, navigation, weaving, arts and craft, tool making, songs and dances, storytelling, games, and conflict resolutions.”

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to establish Carolinian and Chamorro village cultural centers in the CNMI for the revitalization of Native knowledge, practices, and resources; the enhancement of Native cultural self-sufficiency; and the protection and strengthening of indigenous cultural knowledge for future generations.

The first objective was to establish centers encompassing both Chamorro and Carolinian culture on the CNMI islands of Saipan, Rota, and Tinian. The Association partnered with the mayors’ offices on each

island to renovate and utilize community buildings for the new centers. Project staff first established the Saipan headquarters, which opened in March 2011 with 125 people and 25 youth attending the opening event. Invested community members helped prepare a second center on Saipan that will be used after the project period. The center on Rota also opened in March 2011, with 88 community members in attendance, and the Tinian center opened in January 2012.

During the project, all centers offered cultural activities twice a month on an ongoing basis; the centers also include gift shops where local artists sell their products. As part of the project, 70 people learned skills for creating money-making items, and a total of 105 cultural experts shared their knowledge with community members. Center activities included lessons on traditional food, rope making, traditional medicine, navigation, dances, storytelling, weaving, traditional farming, and Carolinian and Chamorro languages, among other topics. The project director and many of the cultural experts will continue the activities on a volunteer basis, and the Mayors of Rota and Tinian created positions for the local coordinators to keep the centers and gift shops open.

The second objective was to research and publish resource material on traditional Chamorro songs. The project director and cultural consultants traveled to Guam, Rota, Tinian, and Saipan to collect research for the book. Project staff interviewed 40 individuals with knowledge of Chamorritas, and collected 21 recordings. The Association printed 1,000 copies of the resulting “Mariana Islands Kantan Chamorro” resource book and CD, which has recordings of Chamorritas. The section in the book providing context and stories about the songs is translated in English, Chamorro, and Carolinian; the song

recordings are only in Chamorro. Project staff will distribute some books to schools, and will sell the others to help sustain the cultural centers and additional printing of the resource book and CD.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The goal of the centers was to benefit the community by teaching and passing on knowledge. While the project did not focus on establishing a tourist attraction, the Association plans to market the gift shop to tourists to generate economic benefits for local artists. The real impact of the cultural centers is providing community members an opportunity to learn traditional skills and practices.

As the project director stated, “If we don’t do it now it’s going to get lost; the next generation has to make up their own mind, but we have to give them the foundation.” Similarly, the Chamorro book and CD have preserved a unique aspect of the culture for future generations, and it is the most comprehensive collection of Chamorritas ever published.

People enjoy coming to the centers to gather, learn, work, and sell crafts. The centers created a social network for the community. The project director reported youth are excited to come to cultural activities, and for some this is the first time they hear and speak their Native language. This project also reached Carolinian and Chamorro people who have moved away from the islands for school or work; young adults in the U.S. would sometimes find out about the activities and ask their parents to go and learn so they could teach them later.

This is a critical time for the culture and customs of CNMI because a lot of healers and cultural experts are passing on; this project has been instrumental in preserving knowledge and perpetuating Carolinian and Chamorro practices.