

Association of American Indian Physicians



Project Title:	Family Wellness and Youth in Distress Project
Award Amount:	\$447,145
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2007 – Sept. 2009
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 5 jobs created
- 1 Native American consultant hired
- 427 youth involved
- 32 elders involved
- \$268,754 in resources leveraged
- 1,185 individuals trained
- 41 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP) was founded as a nonprofit organization in 1971 in Oklahoma City by 14 American Indian and Alaska Native physicians. AAIP provides educational programs, health initiatives, and supportive services to American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

The Family Wellness and Youth in Distress Project, which assists Native American families by providing youth programs to prevent abuse and preserve culture, is in its second implementation phase. The initial phase of the project developed curriculum focused on reducing youth violence and strengthening the family unit. Staff

designed the curriculum for all individuals engaged in programs involving Native American children, including parents, school teachers, counselors, juvenile probation officers, tribal court personnel, and social service agency staff.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a parenting supplement to the curriculum and to develop a tribal court justice model to encourage family cohesion while one parent is incarcerated.

The first objective was to develop the “Positive Indian Parenting” reference manual. To develop the manual, AAIP worked with the Minnesota Positive Indian Parenting Program, which provided the manual utilized by the state of Minnesota. The manual was used as a guide and tailored to meet the unique needs of Oklahoma Indian families. The reference manual exposed Indian parents to traditional child rearing methods, as well as life skills. In addition to the information provided to parents, the manual included exercises, handouts, and strategies for forming talking circles.

The second objective was to develop a partnership with the Oklahoma City Public Schools (OCPS). This partnership produced the Developing Responsible United Mature Students (DRUMS) Project which targets at-risk male youth. Teachers and school administrators nominated 15 students, of which 8 participated in the program. The students, four mentors, and project staff organized and participated in a four-day retreat at the Stroud Wilderness Center in Stroud, Oklahoma, where mentors and students created powwow-quality Native American drums. Students also participated in life skills, traditional values, and family wellness workshops.

The third objective was to develop a tribal court model to encourage tribal judiciary systems to make efforts to maintain family cohesion. In coordination with consultants and the Justice Resource Center, AAIP developed a model to be distributed to tribal court systems in an effort to maintain family ties after a parent is sentenced. The model is a guide on how to ensure continued contact between parent and child. The tribal court systems AAIP worked with included the Chickasaw, Cheyenne-Arapaho, Quapaw, Citizen Potawatomi, Otoe-Missouri, Kickapoo, and Absentee-Shawnee. AAIP also presented a Tribal Courts Promoting Healing and Family Wellness Symposium at their 2009 Annual Conference to further inform its membership about the importance of health and healing within the tribal judicial system.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Positive Indian Parenting module was presented at 12 communities throughout western Oklahoma. These sessions included involvement from community elders who shared knowledge of traditional parenting techniques. One of the most critical items shared during the sessions was that parents and grandparents make mistakes, and it is

how you overcome those mistakes and move on that is critical. Parents and caregivers also learned they need to take care of themselves – physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially – in addition to caring for their dependents.

Following the DRUMS retreat, the students took the initiative to form practice sessions to continue learning how to play their drums. These practice sessions coincided with the monthly Indian parent meeting held by OCPS. The Indian parent meetings have seen a ten-fold increase in attendance. Additionally, the students continue to be monitored by the school system, and AAIP staff shared they are exhibiting fewer discipline problems and expressing more interest in academics and extra-curricular activities such as athletics and JROTC.

Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation



Project Title:	Citizen Potawatomi Native American Financial Education and Entrepreneur Training Program Expansion Project
Award Amount:	\$202,288
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2008 – Sept. 2009
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 4 jobs created
- 3 Native American consultants hired
- 37 youth involved
- 158 individuals trained
- 12 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN), headquartered in Shawnee, Oklahoma, is the ninth largest federally recognized tribe in the United States. In 2004, the tribe had a resident population of 11,011, with 24,953 enrolled members. Between 1971 and 2005, the Nation went from having an annual budget of \$550 to being the largest employer in Pottawatomie County, with 980 full-time employees.

The Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation (CPCDC) is a nonprofit organization established to promote community and business development through the promotion and support of Native American owned

businesses. The CPCDC works to increase the financial knowledge of tribal members through four specific areas: micro-business loans, commercial lending, CPN employee loans, and a new asset building Individual Development Account (IDA) program.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to increase CPCDC's organizational capacity to deliver higher levels of business technical assistance, workshops, and financial education programs.

The project's first objective was to increase the number of financial and entrepreneurship training programs provided by CPCDC. Staff developed four new initiatives, the Potawatomi Business Network (PBN), a workplace-based financial education program, a financial boot camp, and a financial education youth camp. The PBN focused on bringing together businesses owned by CPN members to network, receive training, and learn best practices from one another. Staff held two dinner events, hosting 32 businesses, 12 of

which also received training in Quickbooks. Staff then trained 30 CPN employees in the four-part workplace-based financial education program, 78 individuals in the financial boot camp, and 31 youth in the financial education boot camp.

The second objective was to increase the number and types of methods used by CPCDC to deliver trainings, specifically to reach previously un-served tribal members located throughout the world. First, staff purchased new financial education curricula to support its ongoing programs and purchased a color copier to assist in marketing efforts. CPCDC then created a business mentoring program in conjunction with the PBN program, which provided mentorship to 27 Potawatomi-owned businesses. Staff also planned to create a virtual classroom, which would have given CPN members living far from CPCDC, an opportunity to receive remote trainings. Due to delays with the virtual network technology, however, staff was unable to complete this activity during the project. In preparation, however, staff purchased a television to be used for the virtual trainings.

The final objective was to enhance CPCDC staff capacity and financial knowledge. To do so, CPCDC contracted with a consultant to provide financial education to all staff, including budgeting, money handling, savings, and certification in credit counseling. Another contractor provided staff training in marketing and social networking. Additionally, five staff and board members attended the Oweesta First Nations financial education conference.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

For existing businesses owned by Native Americans in the area, the project helped establish relationships with other Native American-owned businesses, thereby creating vendors and consumers amongst the tribe's members. They also shared best

practices with one another, facilitating the dissemination of business knowledge amongst peers. The project also helped participating businesses manage their finances through software trainings.

Tribal employees benefited through free financial literacy trainings, something long supported by the tribe's human resources department, in part due to its belief that financially solvent employees will have less distractions and perform better.

Finally, the CPCDC benefitted organizationally through its staff's financial and budgetary trainings, which will facilitate the implementation of its training portfolio. Due to staff certification in credit counseling, the CPCDC now has capable credit counselors in-house. Kristi Coker, CPCDC's Executive Director, noted, "In this project we moved from a consumer of the credit counselor training...to a vendor as we built the capacity to deliver the trainings."

To maintain the project's momentum, the newly developed programs and associated purchases were integrated into CPCDC's ongoing programs.

Citizen Potawatomi Nation



Project Title:	Language Preservation Project
Award Amount:	\$251,676
Type of Grant:	Language
Project Period:	Sept. 2007 – Sept. 2009
Grantee Type:	Tribe

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 2 jobs created
- 1 Native American consultant hired
- 30 elders involved
- 234 youth involved
- \$25,728 in resources leveraged
- 1 individual trained
- 10 partnerships formed
- 558 native language classes held
- 234 youth increased their ability to speak a native language
- 85 adults increased their ability to speak a native language

BACKGROUND

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN), headquartered in Shawnee, Oklahoma, is the ninth largest federally recognized tribe in the United States. In 2004, the tribe had a resident population of 11,011 people, with 24,953 enrolled members.

Prior to this project, the tribe estimated only 20 speakers of the Potawatomi language remained and the youngest fluent speaker was 68 years old. Respondents to a tribal needs survey reported overwhelming interest

in learning and preserving the Potawatomi language.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to mitigate the decline of the Potawatomi language by teaching younger generations of Potawatomi their native language.

The project’s first objective was to develop and implement a sequential set of language curricula for tribal youth. To do so, staff researched examples of existing native language curricula, deciding to base the Potawatomi curricula on the Cherokee Tribe’s model. Next, staff established a Potawatomi Language Society (PLS) with eight members who met bi-weekly to provide guidance on the key concepts to include within the curricula.

Staff then developed a language curriculum for four and five year olds, using the experience to glean best practices and resolve unforeseen challenges before beginning development of the other youth curricula. Staff also developed an informal evaluation system for students to determine how well they met learning targets, including knowledge of new vocabulary and songs. The PLS reviewed and revised the

curriculum prior to implementation, ensuring its cultural relevance. Staff then taught the curriculum for 2 years via 15-minute tri-weekly classes to roughly 40 students.

Using the template of the curriculum developed for the 4-5 year olds, staff created curricula for 2-3 and 6-12 year olds, thereby establishing a base language program for children from 2-12 years of age. Cumulatively, over 230 tribal youth received language instruction from the curricula developed in the project. As a supplement to the printed curricula, staff developed online games, recordings, and other resources.

The project's next objective was to develop a series of curricula for Potawatomi adult language learners. Again, staff based the adult curricula on a Cherokee language curriculum. Following the same pattern of the youth curricula development, the PLS met with staff to provide cultural direction for the curricula. Staff developed introductory, intermediate, and advanced curricula with accompanying assessment tools. Staff then taught beginning and intermediate classes once weekly for 1 ½ hours to almost 20 students for 15 months. As an alternative to in-person instruction, staff also developed an online training component, which allowed 48 adults, including 14 regular attendees, to receive language instruction remotely. Although staff completed the curriculum for the advanced adult class, no adult students reached advanced fluency by the end of the project so no classes were held.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

For the Potawatomi Nation, the project established the framework for the preservation and maintenance of the Potawatomi language. Project Director Justin Neely noted, "We have a limited and dwindling pool of speakers and this project

created the beginning stages and some chances for advancement for Potawatomi language learning." When compared to previous efforts to maintain the tribe's language, Ruby Withrow, a participating elder, shared, "This effort is much stronger and has already met some basic language needs in the community."

Staff also noticed an increased sense of pride amongst the 234 youth participants, noting many return home speaking the language and singing songs in Potawatomi for the first time. Ms. Withrow shared, "These lessons will stick with the kids forever. They will look back on this as part of their childhood and culture."

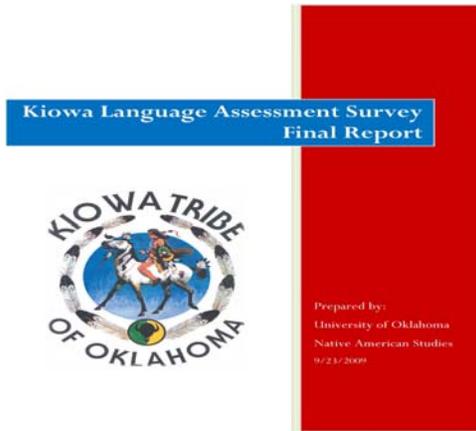
For adult learners, many of whom reported long-held dreams of learning the Potawatomi language, the classes provided a platform for reconnecting with their language and culture. The online training option provides a learning environment for adults who are either too far away to attend live classes or who want to study the language but dislike classroom settings. As a result of these classes, 85 adult learners studied the language, and 2 speakers have become advanced intermediate speakers.

Confirming the CPN's commitment to the language, the tribe allocated a budget to fund at least the next 12 months of the program, allowing all curricula developed through the project to continue being taught.

"We've made a lot of headway towards making this a living language again."

Ruby Withrow, Tribal Elder

Kiowa Cultural Preservation Authority



Project Title:	Kiowa Language Assessment Survey
Award Amount:	\$99,905
Type of Grant:	Language
Project Period:	Sept. 2008 – Sept. 2009
Grantee Type:	Tribal Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 1 job created
- 2 Native American consultants hired
- 10 elders involved
- 6 youth involved
- \$7,660 in resources leveraged
- 9 partnerships formed
- 1 language survey developed
- 469 language surveys completed

BACKGROUND

The Kiowa Tribe is located in southwestern Oklahoma and counts 11,196 enrolled members, of which approximately 6,000 reside on the reservation. In the 1940s, Parker Mackenzie, a Kiowa tribal member and linguist, developed an alphabet and writing system for the Kiowa language.

The Kiowa Cultural Preservation Authority (KCPA), authorized by the Kiowa Tribe in 2004, is a nonprofit entity whose mission is to preserve the Kiowa culture. KCPA accomplishes this goal through education and research conducted mainly at the Kiowa Tribal Museum.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project was to create and conduct a survey to develop a baseline of information on tribal members' fluency in the Kiowa language and to measure their interest in learning Kiowa.

The first objective was to develop a language survey for tribal members living both on and off the reservation. KCPA staff gained permission from the University of Oklahoma to use their survey which had been developed for members of the Cherokee Nation. Staff adapted the survey, with the minimal modifications of changing "Cherokee" to "Kiowa," to obtain information from the Kiowa Nation. The staff utilized the survey to assess current Kiowa language fluency and usage; the survey was designed to provide an opportunity for tribal members to share ideas on the content and structure of a planned Kiowa language preservation program.

The second objective was to conduct the survey and analyze the results. During the project timeframe, KCPA staff sent out 4,372 surveys to enrolled tribal members. The surveys were mailed, e-mailed and handed out at various community events. In

order to obtain names and addresses of tribal adults, KCPA staff contacted several tribal agencies including the enrollment office, tax office, and election board. KCPA staff then cross-referenced all of the lists and eliminated duplications, missing, and deceased people. Of the surveys distributed, community members returned 469 completed surveys, a return rate of approximately 11 %. KCPA staff then collaborated with the University of Oklahoma's Native American Studies Program (UONASP) to analyze the results. Of the surveys returned, only 2% of the respondents indicated they were fluent in the Kiowa language, and the majority of these speakers were between 70-80 years of age.

Under the direction of KCPA, UONASP authored a report on the survey findings. The report confirmed there was considerable loss of the Kiowa language, and only 24 of respondents reported Kiowa fluency. Ninety-seven percent of respondents indicated some level of interest in learning Kiowa, with 71% stating they were very interested. Respondents chose from four options on how they would like to improve their language ability, and could indicate multiple responses.

One of the challenges KCPA staff faced was the Kiowa Tribe did not recognize an official tribal language. The KCPA petitioned the Tribal Council and were successful at getting a resolution passed to make Kiowa the official language of the Kiowa Tribe. This resolution recognized the usage of both Parker McKenzie's alphabet, as well as the usage of phonics, which has traditionally been the main method utilized to teach Kiowa to tribal members.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

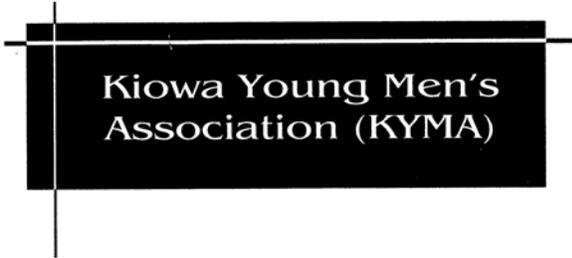
For the Kiowa tribal community, participation in the language survey fostered an environment of empowerment, as they were provided an opportunity to give

guidance on the type of language programs they would like implemented. Of the 469 tribal members who completed surveys, 404 tribal members indicated they wanted to learn the Kiowa language. Results from the survey analysis had the following results: 41% wanted to improve speaking ability; 31% to learn to read and write phonetically; 23% to learn to read and write using the McKenzie alphabet; and 30% wanted to learn to translate Kiowa into English. Fifty-nine percent of respondents resided outside the Kiowa tribal community from areas such as Tulsa and Oklahoma City. These urban Kiowa tribal members had the strongest feelings, indicating they wanted to be more in touch with Kiowa culture, specifically learning the Kiowa language.

An unintended benefit of this project was the development of a master tribal membership mailing list, which project staff shared with the Kiowa Tribe.

KPCA staff and Kiowa tribal leaders now have clear, current, and accurate information about the language status and needs of their community. A foundation for appropriate policy implementation and Kiowa language program development has therefore been successfully built by the work of this project.

Kiowa Young Men's Association



Kiowa Young Men's Association (KYMA)

"Preserving Kiowa Culture for the Next Generation"

Project Title:	Kiowa Young Men's Empowerment Project
Award Amount:	\$140,149
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2008 – Sept. 2009
Grantee Type:	Native Nonprofit

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 3 jobs created
- 1 business created
- 3 Native American consultants hired
- 6 elders involved
- 40 youth involved
- \$880 in resources leveraged
- 44 individuals trained
- 5 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Kiowa Tribe is located in southwestern Oklahoma and counts 11,196 enrolled members. The Kiowa Young Men's Association (KYMA), located in Anadarko, OK, is a nonprofit organization designed to counsel and train young men residing in the former Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Indian Reservation.

According to KYMA, the targeted service area is financially depressed, and experiences a high level of substance abuse, domestic violence, crime, and premature death. Additionally, the grantee states there is little opportunity for young Kiowa men to

establish themselves financially and educationally.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The project's purpose was to develop and implement a series of workshops which strengthened life skills and cultural learning within the target population.

The project's first objective was to complete a curriculum for 6 workshops and train approximately 15 independent young adults. In order to establish a viable and self-sufficient lifestyle, each workshop was designed to empower the individual young adult in achieving an independent lifestyle. Project staff collaborated with three consultants to develop and present workshops on traditional values and methods to establish a positive life path. As part of the curriculum, the participants outlined milestones for gaining skills in solving problems associated with living within the former Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Indian Reservation area.

The project's second objective was to implement the curriculum. Forty-four individuals participated in at least one of the six eight-hour sessions. At the beginning of the first session, students were tasked to

create an individual plan, outlining what they wished to accomplish during the course. Each of these monthly sessions had a life skills training in the morning, such as resume writing or preparation for a job interview. The afternoon portion featured a traditional or cultural session, such as a language or Kiowa history lesson. The participants created workbooks containing their plan and assignments throughout the course. The instructors tracked the students' progress of knowledge retention and application of the skills they learned through these workbooks.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

According to the KYMA, each individual attained at least one of the items on their individual plan, such as starting a micro-business. The project director continued to keep in contact with the participants after the project ended and reported many continued to follow through with the other items in their personal plan. With the participation of the elders, young Kiowans were able to reconnect to their language and culture. Additionally, all of the young adults have a more positive relationship with tribal elders, especially the six who participated in the project. The experience was mutually beneficial, as elders were able to better understand the lives of the next generation, and learned how to better use technology, such as cell phones and email.

Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma



Project Title:	Pawnee Nation Capacity Building Initiative
Award Amount:	\$937,500
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2005 – April 2009
Grantee Type:	Tribe

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 29 jobs created
- 4 Native American consultants hired
- 50 elders involved
- 100 youth involved
- \$2,528,755 in resources leveraged
- 85 people trained
- 7 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Pawnee Nation, whose traditional homelands lie in Nebraska and Kansas, is a federally recognized tribe of 2,577 members with 20,000 acres of tribally-owned and allotted lands in north central Oklahoma, including a 684-acre tribal reserve.

Between 1995 and 2005, the Pawnee Nation experienced unprecedented growth, with value of the nation's grants and contracts rising from \$2 million to \$22 million. By 2005, the nation operated 30 programs, and had major projects on the horizon that would create more social, cultural, and economic growth. Despite more than doubling its staff from 40 to 83 people during that period, the tribe still lacked the administrative systems, structure, policies, procedures, and trained

workforce to provide the level of services needed by the tribal community.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The project's purpose was to strengthen the tribal government's capacity to meet the demands caused by the growth of tribal programs and its capacity to exercise local control over its resources.

To accomplish this, the project team used a 3-pronged strategy: (a) conducting a review of all organizational, managerial, and staff functions, including workforce utilization; (b) implementing the results of the review in a holistic, integrated way; and (c) implementing the results of the workforce utilization study by creating a professional development training program.

In year one, the Pawnee Nation conducted an intensive evaluation and analysis to assess infrastructure, administrative, and workforce needs, with the help of a consultant selected by the governing council, the Pawnee Business Council. Despite difficulty filling project positions and discontent with proposals developed by the first consultant hired, the team carried out the organizational assessment and workforce analysis. These efforts produced

a road map establishing major goals, objectives, tasks, and timelines; organizational design, management, and evaluation frameworks; and a phased two-year cost effective plan for restructuring, reorganizing, and improving processes within the tribal government. The workforce analysis included: a workforce skills study; strategic workforce planning; a review of education and training requirements needed to ensure an effective, efficient, and sustainable staff; an analysis of tribal training policies and performance measurement standards; and a design for an in-house professional development program.

In years two and three, project staff implemented the proposals made in the assessment and workforce analysis. The first step undertaken, involving tribal leadership, tribal members, and the Pawnee Attorney General, entailed developing and updating governing documents, by-laws, policies, and procedures. Tribal members amended the Pawnee Constitution in a referendum vote, allowing for changes in the way the tribe's governing council and the administrative departments operate, and in the way council-level vacancies were filled. These changes promoted the credibility of the council and paved the way for administrative changes.

The administrative reorganization occurred in three phases, in which tribal departments and sub-departments were dissolved, created, expanded, reduced, renamed, and/or moved to better reflect their purpose, ensure staff collaboration, ensure cost effectiveness, and meet community needs. Gradually, the team redrafted the tribe's organizational chart, reducing 30 departments to 8, creating new departmental policy and procedure manuals, changing the majority of tribal job descriptions, and adding 24 new positions.

In partnership with Pawnee Nation College, an institution of higher learning located on

the tribal reserve, the project team established a professional development training program to boost individual and organizational productivity, develop technical skills, sharpen "soft" skills, and enhance the ethical standards and professionalism of tribal employees. After assessing the skills, expertise, and training needs of staff and council members, the team developed separate modules, training matrices, and schedules for management, support staff, and the Pawnee Business Council. By project's end, 85 personnel had completed at least one training course.

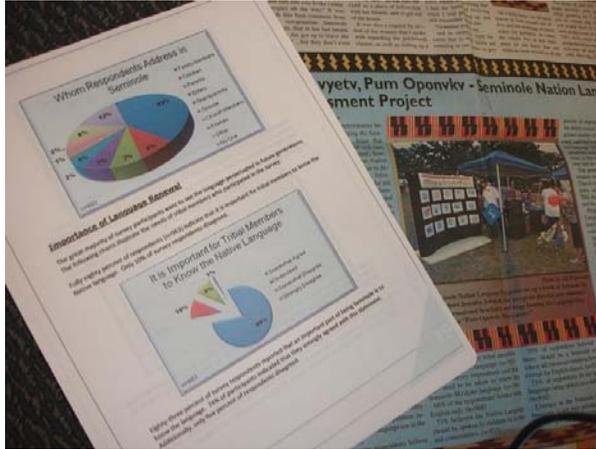
Other changes produced by the project included standardizing quarterly reporting processes for tribal programs, revising human resource policies and procedures, creating employee evaluation forms, developing a strategic fundraising plan for the tribe, and drafting procedures for a centralized purchasing system. Due to a lack of revenue from gaming operations and new enterprises, the tribe has not increased salaries, wages, or benefits as intended, but is committed to doing this at a later date.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

This project did much to: improve internal communication; create an environment in which tribal administrators had more time for deliberation and planning; ensure better coordination of resources; facilitate greater organizational efficiency; address understaffing issues; and empower employees to more directly influence their career paths and the scope of their day to day work.

Project planners believe that these changes will result in a lasting improvement of staff morale, enhance the quality of service delivery to tribal members, and promote the Pawnee Nation's long term economic and social development.

Seminole Nation of Oklahoma



Project Title:	Seminole Nation Language Assessment Project
Award Amount:	\$89,070
Type of Grant:	Language
Project Period:	Sept. 2008 – Sept. 2009
Grantee Type:	Tribe

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 2 jobs created
- 2 Native American consultants hired
- 17 elders involved
- 1 youth involved
- \$19,533 in resources leveraged
- 10 partnerships formed
- 1 language survey developed
- 1,020 language surveys completed

BACKGROUND

The Seminole people are heterogeneous, with roots in several tribes including the Oconees, Yuchis, Alabamas, Choctaws, Shawnees, and Mvkoke (Muscogee), or Creeks. *Seminole*, in fact, is a derivative of a Mvkoke word transcribed from a Spanish misnomer used to label the diverse group of tribes living in Florida at the time of the conquest. In the 1840s, the U.S. government forced the majority of Seminoles to resettle in modern day Oklahoma.

The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is a federally recognized tribe located in Seminole County, Oklahoma. Of the tribe's

15,524 enrolled members, roughly 5,300 live within the county.

Beginning in 2005, the tribal government held a series of community meetings to identify the needs of the membership, and uncovered wide support for the creation of a language preservation program. An obstacle to creating a new language program, however, was the tribe's lack of knowledge about its remaining number of fluent speakers and the extent of the language's presence in the community.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to conduct a language assessment to evaluate the status of the Seminole Language within the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma.

The project's first objective was to develop the language assessment survey. To do so, newly hired project staff attempted to partner with a tribally-appointed language curriculum committee. The committee, however, was unable to conduct meetings due to inclement weather and personal health issues. As an alternative, staff partnered with the tribe's historic preservation officer and volunteers from the community to review language surveys

conducted by other organizations, including the National Indian Education Association and other local tribes. The group then developed a survey specifically for the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma.

The second objective was to secure and compile responses from over 1,000 language assessments, which staff felt was a large enough number to represent a statistically significant portion of the tribe's population. Staff planned to gather a significant number of survey responses through eight scheduled focus groups. However, despite an advertising campaign that included fliers, the local media, and word-of-mouth, no community members attended the focus groups. Staff then began a campaign to secure individual responses, distributing 2,000 surveys and receiving 1,040 responses, a 50% return rate. To ensure a high response, staff and volunteers attended community events, advertised in local media, and conducted home visits.

Staff then compiled the data returns, which revealed that only 10% of the respondents consider themselves speakers of the language, much lower than previously estimated. Staff presented the results to 220 community members at a language banquet held in September, 2009 and distributed the findings to over 1,000 community members at the Seminole Nation Days.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The high rate of survey responses and resulting data constitute major strides in the tribe's language preservation efforts. Staff reported that the presentation of survey results to the community successfully conveyed the precarious situation of the language and began a momentum shift in favor of a concerted program to preserve the language. Staff shared that community members trusted the results, in part because they saw the staff, "out in the community on a daily basis, trying to get the surveys back."

By soliciting feedback from a widespread audience, including off-reservation, overseas, and incarcerated tribal members, staff ensured that the tribe received a comprehensive data set and engendered community support. The survey results also demonstrated community interest in developing language fluency amongst members, specifically through immersion language teaching, rather than focusing on language preservation through documentation.

Prior to this project, the Seminole language was taught in several of the area's public schools, but had been discontinued. Due in part to the support garnered for language preservation through this project, the tribe purchased a classroom space and committed funds to implement an infant language immersion program.

"This project fully addressed our need to understand our situation with regard to language ability. When we got the results, it was like when someone who's been walking around in the dark for a long time is finally given a flashlight."

Jennifer Johnson, Project Director