

LAC DU FLAMBEAU BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR CHIPPEWA INDIANS



Project Title:	Lac du Flambeau Gifted and Talented (Student and Family) Ojibwe Language Project
Award Amount:	\$453,510
Type of Grant:	Language
Project Period:	Sept. 2005 – Sept. 2008
Grantee Type:	Tribe

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 5 jobs created
- 2 Native American consultants hired
- 6 elders involved
- 500 youth involved
- \$3,000 in resources leveraged
- 3 partnerships formed
- 2 language teachers trained
- 3,000 native language classes held
- 250 youth increased their ability to speak a native language
- 100 adults increased their ability to speak a native language

BACKGROUND

The Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Reservation is located in the northeast portion of Wisconsin. Most of the Reservation is located in Vilas County, with small portions in Iron and Oneida Counties. There is a total enrollment of 3,057 band members, with approximately 1,608 residing on the reservation.

The Tribe’s current Ojibwe language program caters well to those who are casual learners. However, serious learners require new and expanded approaches for progress in their pursuit of fluency. The Tribe also has over 500 students enrolled in language classes at the local public school, but many are not receptive to learning Ojibwe. Barriers to learning the language include poor attitudes regarding the language, limited instructional time and limited instructional approaches.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of the project was to increase tribal members’ proficiency with the Ojibwe language through teacher training, producing video tapes and workbooks, language immersion sessions, and language classes.

The project’s first objective sought to develop workbooks to increase language teaching materials. During the three years of the project, project staff worked with elders and developed over 60 workbooks for seven fluency levels. Each book has a theme, such as relatives, household words, verbs, animals and telling time.

Two of the project's objectives focused on increasing the language performance of 16 students and 32 parents to 75% proficiency each year. In the first months of the project, staff recruited 27 students from the local high school and 32 parents to participate in language immersion classes and summer camps. Project staff administered pre and post-tests to determine participants' proficiency levels. At the project's close, project staff found that students with regular attendance achieved the targeted level. The adults took community classes twice a week, however recruiting challenges made it difficult to achieve significant proficiency improvements.

Objective three was to develop videotapes to use as teaching materials. The staff members aimed to develop 35 videotapes over the course of the project, however due to lack of participation, only 12 were produced.

The project's fourth objective sought to provide teacher training, including annual pre and post-testing. Project staff delivered 520 hours of teacher training each year to 2 teachers, conducting informal evaluations periodically.

The fifth objective was to complete an annual evaluation of the project. This objective evolved into a more informal evaluation, consisting primarily of discussions with an outside source regarding recommendations for the project.

The project suffered from understaffing, and the program director was overburdened by both administrative and programmatic duties due to the lack of an assistant. This resulted in less time spent on the teacher training and immersion class components of the project. The Tribe also encountered a cut back in staffing, resulting in further challenges in accomplishing the project objectives and activities.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

High school students improved their language skills through daily exposure to Ojibwe. Students also increased their knowledge of the Tribe's culture and history during the summer immersion camps, boosting their self-esteem and sense of self-worth. Consequently, the students' parents are pleased their children have a better understanding of the language.

Tribal elders have a newfound sense of pride in their language and culture. The project developed an important role for them in the community, warranting respect from the tribal youth and young adults.

The project made the language more accessible to tribal members. Leon Valliere, the program director, stated, "You need to hear the language before learning it, and the project provided this opportunity." The Tribe is hoping to continue the program through future grant funds.

"It's important to me to keep our language alive. If our language is lost then slowly our traditions, our culture and even our way of life will disappear."

Sequoya Mitchell, High School Student