



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

INSTITUTION

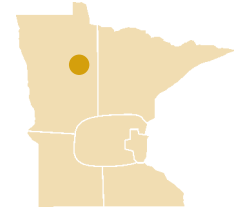
PROJECT/REQUEST

LOCATION

**Bemidji State
University and
Northwest
Technical
College**
Bemidji

American Indian
Collaborative

\$1,500,000



Project at a Glance

- Build an education and training collaborative to improve the socio-economic status of American Indian people in northern Minnesota
- Deliver culture-based skills training in gaming, nursing and building trades
- Develop a Policy and Leadership Institute to provide a regional forum for American Indian leaders to address policy issues in a collaborative way
- Support small business ownership through entrepreneur and business development programs with three American Indian nations
- Develop regional partnerships with business, industry, economic development organizations, nonprofit groups and higher education, focused on nation building for neighboring American Indian communities

Project Description

No one could remember the last time that the tribal chairmen of three neighboring American Indian nations in northern Minnesota met in the same room to discuss common concerns. When they did

gather in 2005 at Northwest Technical College in Bemidji, Red Lake, Leech Lake and White Earth leaders shared their visions of improving the socio-economic condition of their people and their communities.

They shared stories about the struggles of their youth who were losing hope for a brighter future. They talked of businesses closing, lack of well-paying jobs, poor schools and high dropout rates. They said they feared for their people as they faced health issues of obesity and diabetes, drug and alcohol abuse, and the rise of organized gang activity.

A more vital economy, they said, was the key to lifting people out of poverty and helplessness, and they agreed that education was the best approach to building a vital economy.

As a result these three nations have been working to build an education and training collaborative that leverages what they had not been able to achieve independently.

Northwest Technical College, Minnesota State Community & Technical College at Detroit Lakes and Bemidji State University will support this collaborative by



An American Indian collaboration with Bemidji State University and Northwest Technical College will include training programs in nursing, gaming and construction.

providing specific workforce training in the areas of nursing, gaming, construction and others to address health care, tourism and housing needs. This also takes advantage of employment opportunities that exist due to a shortage of skilled labor.

Additional aspects of the collaborative will include the development of a regional Policy and Leadership Institute to bring together American Indian nations to capitalize on their common wisdom and build leadership potential among members.

Teacher training initiatives will provide training to new and current tribal college educators, and an entrepreneurship development program will promote small business ownership among the artisans, farmers, loggers and others who wish to start businesses.

Articulation agreements also will be a focal point to ensure that all graduates of area tribal colleges will be able to pursue a baccalaureate program at any of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Basic adult literacy efforts will make available to all adults who want to read and write the resources necessary to be successful.

A final focus of this collaborative will be to assess the economic development infrastructures, identify partners and leverage resources among economic development agencies, venture capital funds, workforce development programs and employment networks to address specific economic needs.

Project Outcomes

- Improved literacy rates among American Indian people
- Increased enrollment of American Indian students in state colleges and universities and area tribal colleges
- Higher rates of employment among American Indian people in northern Minnesota
- Improved regional economic conditions among American Indian people

Northern Minnesota Indian Education and Training Collaborative Projects

- A Policy/Leadership Institute will be hosted by Bemidji State University's American Indian Resource Center, conducting a Nations Summit of regional American Indian leaders to discuss indigenous policy issues. Leadership programs will be offered to build capacity for self-governance and provide cross-cultural leadership in the region.
- Entrepreneur training will assist American Indian people interested in starting or expanding a small business. Many are artisans, woodcrafters, natural plant and food growers, and specialty food manufacturers working on small scales. Training, consultations, mentorship programs and access to small business development programs will be provided to build successful businesses and bring products to a national and international market.
- Culture-based workforce training programs for American Indian people will be provided through credit and noncredit programs. Initial areas of emphasis will be on industries experiencing an immediate need that can be filled by American Indian people who gain skills training. Specific education and training will be offered for the gaming industry, nursing and a spectrum of building trades. Workers entering and continuing their education in these fields will have greater opportunities for higher wage jobs that enable them to stay in their home communities.

- Summer faculty institutes will bring tribal college teachers to immersion settings to build their curriculum, delivery and culture-based skills. Participants will learn from each other and their natural surroundings and develop a shared vision for best practices in American Indian student achievement.
- Additional investments in adult literacy programs will help prepare all potential students and workers to succeed in an educational and training setting.

Participating Institutions:

Northwest Technical College and Bemidji State University through their joint "Custom College"
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Profiles

Red Lake

Total land area:
 825,654 square miles
 within nine
 Minnesota counties
 Enrollment: 8,000
 Nation Population:
 5,071 (2000)

Leech Lake

Total land area:
 677,099 square miles
 within four Minnesota
 counties
 Enrollment: 7,085
 Nation Population:
 4,561 (2000)

White Earth

Total land area:
 837,121 square miles
 within three
 Minnesota counties
 Enrollment: 20,255
 Nation Population:
 3,378 (2000)



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