

## 2000 Annual Report Executive Summary

### Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community

To truly understand and appreciate the accomplishments of Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community, Inc. (NiiJii) during CY2000 – which is also NiiJii's FY – one must have some understanding of Indian Country. NiiJii, which is an Ojibway work for "friends," is very much built upon, and operates in accordance with, traditional tribal principles and values. A moment must be taken to attempt to set a context for NiiJii, which is best reflected in excerpts from our collective Vision/Value Statement:

The Northwoods NiiJii communities are determined to build successful community economies based upon the wisdom of Native American culture and spirituality. This wisdom is holistic in its applications, seeing earth, water, sky, people and all life as part of a web where action taken toward a single strand have implications for other strands in a concentric circle outward...

The following six items provide an overview of significant accomplishments at the Board and "Whole Zone" level which encompasses all three primary tribal partners – Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Menominee Nation, Sokaogon Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa - and their respective developable site partners. The whole zone discussion is followed by partner-specific summaries of progress achieved in each community.

- 1) Transitioning from a working Board to a policy Board via organizational/ administrative staff development – incrementally transferring duties/responsibilities to staff, obtaining office space, public relations materials, expanding the Board from nine to 15 members to broaden citizen participation, establishing centralized support systems;
- 2) Formalizing and refinement of the three "Sub-Zone" committee structures/procedures – establishing a methodology to increase citizen participation/monitoring/evaluation, and setting in place formalized protocol between sub-zones and the Board;
- 3) Developing a solid two-year plan of work (FY00-02) with respective budgets to systematically advance the 10-year Strategic Plan – prioritizing prerequisite benchmark implementation requirements to long-term sustainable development accomplishments;
- 4) Compliance with both EZ/EC designation and 501(C)(3) requirements – completion of financial management systems/CPA Compilation, and related policies/procedures;
- 5) Board Retreat/New Member Orientation – revisiting foundational strategic plan issues, networking with Kentucky RII Rural EC senior mentor/presenter, and focusing upon FY2001 plans of work;
- 6) Significant progress on Benchmark 52-Eco-Tourism through an USDA – RBEG grant sponsored study titled Tourism Development: Existing and Potential Cultural, Heritage and Nature-based Opportunities.

The many volunteer efforts put forth to date by our working board of directors of the Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community, has been done in belief that a combination of:

- our excellent Ten Year Strategic Plan,
- citizen involvement,
- real working/seed capital, and
- networking/leveraging available resources with all other pertinent resources,
- will bring our benchmarks and our goal to alleviate poverty in our communities to realities.

The Board has persevered, for more than two years, in its attempt at learning the vast and encompassing USDA system and to work to become a fully functioning 501(C)(3) organization. Much volunteer time, money and energy by our Board and our respective employers, has been put forth, in an attempt to arrive at the point whereby the limited amount of working capital accessed thus far by Northwoods NiiJii has been utilized to its best use. Full documentation of Board in kind support has not been completed for this report, but it is estimated at approximately \$135,000. Furthermore, through 10/00 NiiJii drew down only \$31,580 in USDA-RD EZ/EC Seed Money, which was leveraged into a total of \$11,239,640 in Benchmark Project funding (i.e. a 356 leveraged to 1USDA-RD dollar ratio). These dollars reflect CY2000 activity in some 32 of our 55

approved Benchmarks.

#### Mole Lake/Nashville:

The Town of Nashville and Mole Lake recognized their problems with capacity and slow progress on benchmark completion and addressed those areas of concern by forming a Sub-zone committee and meeting weekly which brought about a closer relationship, improved communication and better facilitation on benchmark projects. Together they worked to find funding to help solve their problems and made great progress in attempting to build capacity within their area (Benchmark #55-Capacity Building).

The town was successful in utilizing the private sector in donations to assist in benchmark progress (e.g. #41-Elders' Facility & #45-Water Quality Standards among others). The most successful program created by the town this year was the Human Resources Committee which was formed after results from a community survey indicated that there was immediate need for low-income and elderly residents that just couldn't wait to be addressed through benchmark completion.

This Human Resources program utilized volunteer efforts and private donations to assist residents in immediate need. The wide-spread support and success of the committee prompted other neighboring communities to realize the need in their areas and eagerly joined the Town of Nashville after being invited to partner with us. What began in March, 2000 as a small group grew into a larger committee servicing four communities and also addressing other transportation and housing needs. These communities are also helping with our benchmark project for elderly housing in the area.

#### Lac du Flambeau/Developable Sites:

One of the significant accomplishments was that money has been obtained to expand the water and sewer infrastructure (Benchmark #13 Expand Water/Sewer). A total of \$3,974,000 was obtained through various Rural Development grants/loans. Two engineering firms were hired with specifications near completion. This was coordinated with the Tribal Roads Construction Priority List to obligate money to build the roads for these Subdivisions. \$1,800,000 was requested through the Bureau of Indian Affairs for other road improvements. Potts Bay Subdivision was surfaced and Sugarbush Road engineering plans were completed and will be constructed in the spring of 2001 (Benchmark #12-New Roads). Coordination meetings with the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation to finalize plans for the reconstruction of Highway 47 North were held. It will also be constructed in 2001 to include room for recreation/bike trail to enhance our trail system benchmark (Benchmark #38-Trail System).

There were 24 micro loans granted for a total of \$147,000 to individuals for business start-ups, expansion, education and job related activities (Benchmark #14-Micro Loans). Five persons participated in the matched savings program in which the LdF Tribe budgeted an additional \$50,000 for this purpose. These funds can be used for home purchases and repairs, starting businesses, and education cost. A Tribal 80% and 100% loan guarantee program has been implemented in partnership with three local banks. \$240,000 has been secured for this program. 75 people have participated in the guarantee program.

#### Menominee/Shawano:

A Key accomplishment at the Menominee/Shawano Sub-Zone level focused upon the serious debate and investigation of the nature, composition, structure, purpose and relationships of the sub-zone committee. Numerous collaborative meetings and breakout working sessions lead to an innovative refinement of this unique entity. This investment of time was very important given that the sub-zone structure is now formed to play a pivotal liaison role among and between:

- Geographically distant and diverse need-based communities in the zone
- Functionally separate Menominee/Shawano Benchmark/Task Leaders
- Dissimilar Tribal and Local Non-Indian political structures
- Tribal/City program staff and Benchmark Leaders
- The NiiJii Board of Directors and all of the varied entities referenced above.

Although a work in process, this development has assisted the Menominee/Shawano Sub-Zone to provide improved order/understanding of, and collaboration on respective opportunities and responsibilities among local stakeholders as related to the Northwoods NiiJii EC designation.

Following is a brief outline of Significant Accomplishments during FY2000 by Benchmark Project:

**Benchmark #23-Study Work Study:** This essential pre-workforce development initiative provided some 40 Menominee Youth with summer work experiences throughout the Menominee Reservation (i.e. experiences in government, services, manufacturing and retail career options). Thirty-two (32) of the 40 employee trainees received outstanding evaluations.

**Benchmark #32-Affordable Housing:** A local Housing Task Force has been established and a regular meeting schedule established in addition to numerous meetings as needed. An application was begun to obtain the services of a VISTA volunteer to assist in coordinating the effort. Local manufacturers have thrown their support behind the project because it will provide needed housing for the existing and expanding workforce. A possible mechanism to implement the program is for companies to provide the down payment for a house and local banks, Federal resources, State resources, and a local RLF to provide the balance at affordable interest rates. The money from NiiJii will fund a review/study of various models for Task Force consideration.

**Benchmark #48-Labor Training:** A comprehensive needs assessment study was completed of area businesses/employers. A total of 76 trainees were administered job training program opportunities. Out of the 76 trainees, 35 gained unsubsidized employment. The program interacted with the trainees in a job counseling/job coaching approach to development. The majority of the placements were in the following categories: childcare, general office aide, receptionist, secretary, kitchen helper, pharmacy aide, medical billing clerk, recycling aide, and maintenance/housekeeping. The trainees were employed 16 weeks before job-site selections were made.

Task A was completed as a result of a County Labor Survey funded by SCEPI. It indicated a need for training but on an as needed basis. As a result, it is difficult to implement an all encompassing training program. Instead, we utilize the State resources of DOC and DWD. A case in point is a local company that purchased new equipment and the DOC Specialized Training Fund was utilized. Another case involved a downsizing of a local firm, and a Task Force of NWTC, PIC, DWD and DOD was organized to assist those affected.

**Benchmark #49-Shawano Industrial Park:** Task A was completed and the City now owns 75 additional acres for industrial development at a cost of \$350,000. We are in the process of developing design plans for layout of the park and developing covenants and restrictions. A TIF is also planned for next year and it should be operational for 2003. Successes associated with this Benchmark include: three new business developments; two business expansions; 74 new jobs and 146 retained jobs. The city also awarded three new RLF loans totaling \$155,000, leveraging an additional \$400,000. This activity created 21 new area jobs.

**Benchmark #50-Value-Added Wood Products:** The grand opening of Phase One of the Menominee Tribal Enterprises Value-Added Manufacturing Center took place in July 2000. This impressive 22,000 S.F. facility is the first of a three-phase initiative designed to establish secondary wood products manufacturing operations on the Menominee Indian Reservation. Phase I included \$950,000 in building development – partnering with USDC-EDA with a \$490,000 grant - and over \$1,000,000 in capital equipment, creating eight new jobs and retaining 11. This event sets the stage for the tribe to further capitalize upon their global reputation of third party certified "well managed" sustainable wood products enterprise. Phase II will launch in 2001, with plans of creating more than 20 new jobs.