

Kalispel Tribe of Indians
Usk, WA

Tribal Technology Access Centers (TACs)

TAC-NET (Tribal Access Center Network) Project

“By working together we are certain that we can improve the lives of our children and future generations while maintaining our unique cultural heritage.”

-- Glen Nenema, Chairman, Kalispel Tribe of Indians

Project Purpose

When they first came into contact with European and American explorers at the beginning of the 19th Century, the Kalispel Indians were a tribe of about 3000 semi-nomadic hunters, diggers, and fishermen. Their traditional homeland consisted of a 200-mile stretch of mountainous and forested land along the Pend Oreille River in what is now Montana, Idaho, and eastern Washington. This abundant land and the river it included had provided all of the resources that the Kalispel Tribe needed to sustain their way of life.

By 1980, conditions had changed dramatically for the Kalispel Indians. Both individually and as a tribe, the Kalispel Indians faced physical, spiritual, and economic crises which threatened their very existence. The tribe had lost much of their homeland and were limited to a small reservation of 4,600 acres on the Pend Oreille River about 55 miles north of Spokane, Washington. Because it consisted mainly of hillsides and flood plains, their reservation had little value as farmland and its isolated nature provided few other economic opportunities. Both individual lives and families collapsed under the weight of rampant alcohol abuse, high unemployment, substandard housing, and poor education. The tribe itself faced bankruptcy and an investigation by the IRS.

Over the last two decades, the Kalispel Indians have drawn on the traditions and strength of their ancestors to begin to overcome these crises. First individually and then with the help of others, tribal members began to turn their back on alcohol. These efforts have been so successful that only a handful of tribal members now suffer from alcohol dependency. At the same time, tribal members began to repair the spiritual and emotional damage done to themselves and to their families by alcohol abuse. The tribe also began to address its financial matters – restoring economic solvency and resolving its problems with the IRS.

While addressing these immediate crises, the tribe also began to develop and implement strategies to support the long-term educational development of its members and members of the neighboring Plateau Indian tribes. As the centerpiece of these efforts, the tribe created the Camas Institute to develop and coordinate tribal education projects and to establish partnerships with local school systems, institutions of higher education, and other non-profit and social service organizations in support of these efforts. (See APPENDIX I for description of the mission and work of the Camas Institute)

Meanwhile, the economic development efforts of the tribe took an enormous step forward last year with the opening of the Northern Quest Casino, a tribally-owned gaming establishment located on the

outskirts of Spokane, Washington. To diversify its economic base, the tribe is also exploring the development of aquaculture, recreation, and high-tech industries. (See APPENDIX II for a description of the economic development plans of the Kalispel Tribe)

As the Kalispel Tribe enters the 21st Century, its prospects and those of its members are much improved. The work of the tribal leaders over the previous two decades have successfully laid the foundation for ensuring the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the tribe over the long-term. At the same time, the tribal leaders recognize that problems created over two centuries cannot be solved in two decades – that the work has just begun. This work must actively engage all members of the tribe – those living on the reservation and those who have left the reservation (many of whom live in and around Spokane). The proposed TOP project will contribute to this tribal effort.

The purpose of this proposed project is to use broadband digital network technologies to actively engage all tribal members in preserving and sustaining the living culture, history, and language of the Kalispel Tribe of Indians. To accomplish this, the project will provide all tribal members ready access to the appropriate technological resources. It will assist tribal members in developing the practical knowledge and skills needed to effectively employ these technologies. It will create both institutional structures and learning environments that enable tribal members to contribute to preserving and sustaining Kalispel culture, history, and language.

While this project will target members of the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, it will also actively engage members of other Plateau Indian tribes, particularly members of the Spokane, Flathead, and Coeur d'Alene Tribes who speak similar dialects of the Salish language. In addition, the project will also actively engage non-Indians, particularly those living in Spokane and in the communities surrounding the Kalispel reservation. This reflects a recognition by the tribe that its history, culture, and language and future plans for economic and educational development are closely connected to that of other Indians and non-Indians in eastern Washington.

The expected participants in this project – both Indians and non-Indians – are a significantly underserved population. Pend Oreille County (which includes the Kalispel Reservation) has an unemployment rate almost twice the state rate. Among Native Americans in the county, the unemployment rate was almost five times the state rate. Among Native Americans in Spokane County, the unemployment rate was almost twice the state rate. At the beginning of 2002, the unemployment rate in Washington was 2% higher than that of the nation as a whole. Students in the Cusick School District (which includes the Kalispel Reservation) and Native American students in the Spokane School District passed the state's annual student assessment at only two-thirds the statewide rate. In some grades and subjects (middle and high school math), the passing rates were even lower. (See APPENDIX III for more information on the economic and educational conditions among the project's target population)

This project will contribute to the preservation and continued development of the Kalispel Tribe by

documenting the tribe's culture, history, and language – not as an artifact of the past as a dynamic part of the tribe's current existence. Moreover, it will employ a process which actively engages all tribal members in this effort. The unique culture, history, and language of the Kalispel Tribe have played an important role in helping the tribe overcome the challenges stemming from land loss, alcohol abuse, and economic hardship. However, their culture, history, and language is slowly slipping away as their elders pass on.

At the same time, the project will provide members of the Kalispel Tribe with the technological infrastructure, knowledge, and habits of mind to exchange information, ideas, and perspectives about both their shared past and their shared future. The residences and offices of the Kalispel Tribe and the Camas Institute are separate by about 50 miles. These electronic linkages will offer tribal members an important resource to stay connected with the life of the tribe, particularly those (like some tribal elders) for whom extensive travel may be difficult.

The project will also create a significant resource to allow both Indians and non-Indians in eastern Washington and elsewhere in the country to learn about the history, culture, and language of the Kalispel Tribe and neighboring tribes. For the Kalispel Tribe, this will help strengthen their unity and sense of community. For other Indians and non-Indians, it will provide a greater understanding of their own shared history and culture and promote greater cross-cultural understanding. At the same time, the project can serve as a model for other tribes and for local communities to collaboratively preserve and sustain their own history and culture.

Finally, this project will also provide both Indians and non-Indians with practical avenues for building high-tech knowledge and skills. This will significantly expand their learning experiences and employment opportunities. Given the importance of these skills for both economic and social life in the 21st Century, this could make a major contribution to the economic development both of the tribe and of the surrounding urban and rural communities.

Innovation

This project will draw on the innovative projects already funded by the Technology Opportunity Program. We have particularly focused on projects recently funded through TOP grants in Montana (Indian Technology & Cultural Heritage Learning Centers), New Mexico (Cyber-Sovereignty: Tribal Access Grid for Museums & Culture Centers), and Alaska (Northern Journeys Project). All these projects involve the use of digital network technology for cultural preservation. We have already been in contact with these projects. We plan to incorporate lessons from these projects into our work and to exchange information on our work in the future.

Our project will create an innovative model which complements and builds upon these projects. In addition to focusing on tribal culture and history, our model will incorporate an emphasis on the preservation of the Salish dialect spoken by the Kalispel and neighboring tribes. This will play an

important role in the authentic preservation of tribal lifeways. Tribal elders have emphasized that concepts, ideas, and perspectives can be lost when translated from Salish to English. Anthropological and psycho-linguistic researchers have also found that native languages are essential for understanding and communicating a culture's perceptions and concepts of the world and their own lifeways. Thus, our model can further advance efforts to effectively preserve and sustain tribal culture by focusing on traditions, behavior, history, and language.

Our project will also incorporate a broadband digital network model which is open and accessible to a broad set of audiences, including Kalispel tribal members of all ages – living both on the reservation and in the cities, members of other Plateau Indian tribes in Washington, Idaho, and Montana, and non-Indians residing Spokane and the surrounding communities. Moreover, this network will be structured to actively engage participants, not only to learn about the culture, history, and language of the Kalispel Indians, but also as contributors to its documentation, preservation, and maintenance. As such, this project offers a new model for transforming technology end-users into both creators and consumers of online content – relating specifically to their shared culture, history, and language.

Diffusion Potential

This project addresses three significant problems faced by the Kalispel Tribe. It helps preserve and sustain the culture, history, and language of the tribe as a continuing part of the tribe's lifeway. It helps promote a sense of unity, community, and communication within the Kalispel Tribe, between the Kalispel Tribe and other Plateau Indian tribes, and between Indians and non-Indians in eastern Washington. Finally, it helps tribal members gain both the technical knowledge and the "frame of mind" to make practical and regular use of broadband digital technologies – skills that can improve their individual education and employment opportunities and the economic development prospects for the tribe and communities. These same problems face other Plateau tribes in the region and other Indian tribes across the country. As such, this project has significant potential for diffusion to other tribes in the region and in other parts of the country.

This project is appropriately structured for effective dissemination. The broadband digital network established by the project will be open to participation by broad audience. Thus, other Plateau tribes in the region – which share a history, cultural traditions, and language with the Kalispel – can be formally incorporated into this preservation effort in the future. At the same time, the key elements of the model (involving wide access to appropriate technology, authentic opportunities for learning technical skills, and interactive web-based structure for documentation and learning) can be adapted for use by other tribes to support their own efforts to preserve and sustain the culture, history, and language.

Within the region, the project will employ several avenues to disseminate information on its model. The Kalispel Tribe and the Camas Institute have working relationships with other Plateau Tribes in the region (Coeur d'Alene, Colville Confederated, Flathead, Kootenay, and Spokane) that can be used to carry out both formal and informal dissemination efforts. These tribes also currently collaborate with the

Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture (NWMAC) on a federally-funded project focused on the preservation of tribal culture and history (the Star Nations Project). Because the NWMAC and the Start Nations Project will be integrated with this project, it will offer another avenue for dissemination of the project model within the region.

The project will also pursue broader dissemination efforts outside the region. This will be grounded in collaborative efforts with university-based native language preservation consortia, communication with other innovative cultural preservation projects funded by TOP grants in Montana, New Mexico, and Alaska, and presentations through national Native American organizations, including the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). (See APPENDIX IV for a description of the project's communication plan)

Project Feasibility

Technical Approach

This project will employ broadband digital network technologies to enable all members of the Kalispel Tribe of Indians to contribute to the documentation, preservation, and maintenance of their tribal culture, history and language, while allowing tribal members, members of other Plateau Indian tribes, and non-Indians in the region to actively learn about the tribal culture, history, and language in both formal and informal settings. The project will incorporate four elements (see APPENDIX V for an implementation schedule of major project tasks and milestones):

Tribal Technology Access Centers (TAC's) will be established at multiple sites throughout the Kalispel Reservation and in the Spokane area. Centers will be established (in a sequential basis over a three-year period) on the reservation (in the tribal offices and the community center), in the learning centers operated by the Camas Institute (on the reservation, in Spokane, and near the tribal gaming facility outside Spokane), in public schools located in Spokane (District 81) and the Cusick School District, and in other locations in Spokane (the NWMAC, institutions of higher education, the Spokane Urban Indian Center, and the Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations). Each Center will include networked Pentium 4 computers, digital video cameras, digital audio recorders, digital input devices, CD and DVD recorders, scanners, and high-speed black and color printers. All Centers will be linked by existing broadband systems (either fiber optics or T1 lines) to allow Internet access, email, text, and graphics transfer, two-way video communication, access to digital photographs, and access to streaming video. (See APPENDIX VI for detailed information on the location of the Centers and the broadband systems)

Each Center will provide project participants (Kalispel tribal members, other Plateau Indian tribal members, and non-Indians) authentic training experiences in the use of the technologies available in each Center. This will include using available technologies to access and contribute to web-based information, to translate and transcribe document, to create and archive video and audio recordings,

and to communicate with others in Salish. Organizational staff at each site will also be trained through the project to provide ongoing assistance and support to project participants.

The project will incorporate the use of a web-based environment for documenting and archiving Kalispel tribal culture and history. This web-based environment is currently being developed as part of the Star Nations Project and will be incorporated into this project at no cost. (See APPENDIX VII for a description of the Star Nations Project) The Project will develop, pilot, and implement a web-based framework for the design of interdisciplinary curriculum for teaching tribal culture, history, and language in both formal and informal learning settings. It will also develop, pilot, and implement an interactive environment to enable Salish speakers from the Kalispel tribe and other neighboring tribes to communicate electronically in synchronous and asynchronous settings.

The Camas Institute will establish an Intercollegiate Center for Native Studies to actively support use of the web-based framework for curriculum design on tribal culture, history, and language among institutes of higher education; among elementary and secondary public schools; and among non-school agencies (including the NWMAC, the Healing Lodge, and the Urban Indian Center) involved in lifelong learning.

This project will employ a web-based environment in its activities. The use of a web-based environment will ensure that information collected and curriculum developed (on tribal culture, history, and language) are broadly accessible in a variety of settings thus promoting **interoperability**.

The project will incorporate an emphasis on video, graphic images, photographs, and audio recordings, as well as documents. This will require the use of broadband Internet access to effectively participate in the project. Given the visual and auditory nature of tribal culture and language, **technical alternatives** which did not incorporate the need for broadband access were not considered feasible. However, the project does rely upon the use of existing or planned broadband systems available in Spokane and surrounding areas.

Responsibility for **maintenance** of the elements of the system to be deployed under this project will be shared among several institutions. The computer systems placed in tribal offices and in Camas Institute sites will be maintained and upgraded by the tribe. Systems placed in non-tribal sites will be upgraded and maintained by those organizations. The websites used and created under this project will be maintained and upgraded by the NWMAC and by the tribe. Pend Oreille PUD and XO Communications will maintain the broadband network.

As a web-based system, this project has a high degree of **scalability**. Because it relies on a broadband system and commercial servers for housing its information, the project will actively seek to expand formal involvement of other Plateau tribes in preservation of tribal culture, history, and language. It will also actively seek to involve other school systems, institutions of higher education, informal education sites, and other agencies involved in education.

Applicant Qualifications

The Camas Institute will serve as the lead agency for this project. Its mission is to assist tribal members and other Native American people in meeting their educational needs, talents, and aspirations by developing culturally-sensitive learning environments. In recent years, the Institute has been involved in operating a learning center for children and adults, tutoring services for students, mentoring program, a reading club, cultural arts program, youth programs, parent development, healthy lifestyles development, a computer school, and providing financial aid for higher education. Given the nature and scope of these projects, the Institute possesses both the commitment and the experience needed to organize and conduct the proposed project. (See APPENDIX I for information on the Camas Institute and its staff)

Privacy

Privacy issues are a major concern of the project, the Camas Institute, and the leadership of the Kalispel Tribe. Some information which will be documented and discussed in the context of tribal culture, history, and language will be considered sacred by many members of the tribe. As such, the project will take steps to limit access to some information and some discussions only to tribal members, while other information will be made available to all project participants. Decisions regarding confidentiality of information will be made by the leadership of the Camas Institute in consultation with the Kalispel Tribal Council.

The project will also establish a strict policy protecting the privacy of all project participants. The intent of the policy will be to prohibit the commercial or non-commercial release of specific information on any project participant. The specific policy will be established by the tribal attorney.

Sustainability

This project will support and contribute to the ongoing educational development strategies of the Camas Institute and its partners. This will provide a continuing organizational framework for sustaining and expanding the efforts begun through this project. The Camas Institute is explicitly committed to actively engaging the other Plateau Indian tribes in the region in these efforts – both by directly involving these tribes in project activities and by using the project as a program model.

At the same time, this project will support and contribute to the ongoing economic development efforts of the Kalispel Tribe. As such, the tribe is committed to continuing to invest its resources to maintain and improve the Tribal TAC's established under this project, as well as the web-based environments and the curriculum created under this project and the Star Nations project. Other participating partners, including the public school systems, the NWMAC, and participating non-profit organizations will be responsible for maintaining the TAC's established in their sites.

Community Involvement

Partnerships

This will be a collaborative project led by the Camas Institute of the Kalispel Tribe. Major institutional partners in the project will include the NWMAC in Spokane, Intec, Innovative Education Solutions, Class 101, Spokane School District (District 81), Cusick School District, Spokane Urban Indian Center, and the Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations. (See APPENDIX VIII for descriptions of the partner organizations and APPENDIX X for letters of commitments from these partners)

The Camas Institute will take the lead in creating the Tribal TAC's. The Institute also will work with Tech for Learning, Intec, and Class 101 to design and conduct the authentic technology training activities at the TAC's for project participants. Finally, the Institute will work with Tech for Learning and the NWMAC to develop the web-based environments and the formal and informal learning curriculum. The NWMAC, along with the institutions of higher education, the school districts, the Spokane Urban Indian Center, and the Healing Lodge will house Tribal TAC's and serve as sites for implementing the formal project curriculum.

Process for Obtaining Community Involvement

This project reflect the cultural preservation, language preservation, and education development needs identified through ongoing discussions within the Kalispel Tribe over the last decade. Discussions have been conducted both formally and informally by members of the tribal council, staff of the Camas Institute, and other leading members of the tribe.

Tribal leaders and staff of the Camas Institutes have also conducted ongoing discussions with school systems and institutions of higher education to define education needs of Indian students and curriculum needs related to tribal culture, history, and language. In the development of this project proposal, tribal leaders and staff of the Camas Institute had a series of planning discussions with representatives of the NWMAC, Tech for Learning, Intec, and Class 101.

Support for End Users

This project will target several populations of end-users: Kalispel tribal members and members of other Plateau Indian tribes (who will both contribute to and learn from the cultural and language preservation process); teachers in public schools, institutions of higher education, and other education programs (who will contribute to and implement the curriculum based on the documentation of tribal culture, history, and language); and non-Indians in the region (who will learn from the web-based environment and curriculum). Project activities are intended to ensure that end-users can effectively access the broadband digital network established by this project by providing the technological resources (through the Tribal TAC's), the authentic technology training to use the resources, and the web-based

environment and curriculum to support learning efforts in both formal and informal settings.

Evaluation

The project will conduct an evaluation that focuses both on implementation issues (formative evaluation) and outcomes (summative evaluation). The evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator (Education Policy Research) under contract to the Kalispel Tribe and the Camas Institute. (See APPENDIX IX for a description of the qualifications of the proposed evaluation consultant)

The formative evaluation will be guided by the project's identified plan of implementation (see APPENDIX V for schedule of major project tasks and milestones). The summative evaluation will focus on five key evaluation questions: (1) Did the project advance efforts to preserve and sustain tribal culture, history, and language? (2) Did schools, institutions of higher education, and other education programs effectively employ the curriculum developed through the project? (3) Did the project increase the knowledge of Indians and non-Indians regarding tribal culture, history, and language? (4) Did the project advance the sense of community within the Kalispel Tribe, among the Plateau tribes, and between Indians and non-Indians in the region? (5) Did the project improve knowledge and skills on the use of broadband digital network technologies among tribal members and non-Indians?

The project will employ a participatory, collaborative approach to the collection and analysis of evaluation information. As such, it will actively engage project staff, partners, participants, and other stakeholders in the collection and analysis of evaluation information as partners and not informants. By using a participatory evaluation approach, the evaluation will reflect both an internal and an external perspective on the project. Data collection and analysis will rely upon a balance between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Such a balance will provide both breadth and depth to the data collection and analysis process. Formative evaluation results will be regularly communicated to project staff to ensure effective project implementation. Summative evaluation results will be reported in writing annually to all stakeholders. (see APPENDIX IX for more detailed description of the evaluation plan)