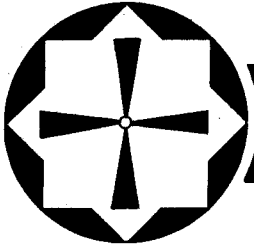


AICH

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AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY HOUSE, INC.



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FINAL PROJECT REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The American Indian Community House (AICH) is a multi-purpose service organization which was established in 1969. Since that time, it has been the primary human service agency in New York City with Native Americans. It is the only agency in the City which is staffed and controlled entirely by Native Americans.

Although New York City is not known for having a large Native American Indian population, according to the 1980 census, there are 11,500 Indian residents. While it is generally agreed that Indians are drastically undercounted in any urban census, it is useful to compare this figure to other cities in states which have a substantial Native American population. For instance, according to the same census, there are approximately 9,000 Indians and Eskimos in Anchorage, Alaska; 7,300 Native Americans in Albuquerque, New Mexico; 10,400 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and nearly 11,000 in Phoenix, Arizona. In this context, the American Indian residents in New York represent a relatively large urban Indian population.

Since its inception the Community House has developed a wide range of services to meet the needs of its constituency. It was formerly the prime sponsor for Indian CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) and is now the prime sponsor for the Jobs Training and Partnership Act for Native Americans in the New York City metropolitan area. It also operates a federally funded Indian Health Program which provides limited primary medical care and referral services for medical and dental services; health education; limited treatment; and community outreach services to Indian clients. Four years ago, the Substance Abuse Program was established through funding by the New York State Division of Substance Abuse. The Program provides both information and referral services for individuals and their families and training resources for agencies which provide treatment for Indians. More recently, the Community House has established a Social Services Program to provide emergency food and shelter on an emergency basis.

Moreover, the Community House also operates two major cultural programs. Native Americans in the Arts (NAIA), was started in 1979 as a theatre group that would present American Indian artists and their works to the general public. It is currently funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. The Community House also operates a Gallery and Gift Shop in the Soho section of Manhattan. It generally mounts two major exhibits of traditional arts and crafts a year. Last year, it generated \$37,500 in income for the organization.

Today, the American Indian Community House is a \$1.3 million dollar agency. However, with the exception of its cultural programs, it is totally dependent on federal and state funding for its operation. Further, many of its programs are limited to information and referral rather than more comprehensive services. Perhaps more importantly, the agency's priorities are determined by what is fundable for Indian programs and not what Indians in New York City consider to be most important.

In this regard, the American Indian Community House proposes to establish a Community Economic Development Program. This program would seek to develop several projects which would respond to some of their immediate survival needs -- i.e., employment, cultural identity, temporary shelter -- and expand the organization's capability to generate income for its own use. This program would eventually become a separately incorporated American Indian Development Corporation that would remain affiliated with the Community House.

NEED

The Native American population in New York City is mostly an invisible one. While 11,500 Indian residents were indicated in the 1980 census, it seems likely that many more were not counted. Too many Indian residents are transients or homeless. Many more simply get lost among other minority groups. Most of them live in extreme poverty and isolation.

As economic conditions on the reservations have become worse, there has been an increase in the number of Indians arriving in cities. However, urban unemployment is exceptionally high and job opportunities are quite limited. Illiteracy and lack of job skills are major obstacles to finding a job for many Native Americans. Federal cutbacks have also reduced the options for training programs.

City life also represents a different and alien culture for most newly arrived Indians. Unable to find employment, their transition to living here is made even more difficult by the lack of suitable support systems. As a result, there has been an increase in alcohol and drug abuse and stress-related illnesses. Moreover, there has been a marked increase in mental health problems and the breakup of families as financial difficulties worsen. While these problems are not at all new, they are greater today than ever before.

At the same time, the American Indian Community House only has a capacity, though obviously limited, to treat the symptoms of these problems rather than address the causes. The Community House has services that respond to illnesses and training needs and even emergency short-term shelters. What it lacks though is the capacity to provide significant resources for facilitating the Native American's transition to New York City cultural life and for creating real employment opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the American Indian Community House Community Economic Development Program are to:

- 1) Establish a labor-intensive business venture to be operated as a subsidiary enterprise of the Community House;

2) Establish an Indian cultural center that would combine some current activities of the Community House, such as the theatre, with new activities, such as an ethnic restaurant and a meeting and resource center;

3) Establish a community -based residence for homeless Indians.

As a result of work on these projects, the Community House will develop an institutional capability to address the long-term employment, cultural and housing needs of the Indian population in New York City. This capability will be ultimately, separately incorporated as an American Indian Development Corporation.

PROGRAM

The American Indian Community House has designated three separate projects as the core of its Community Economic Development Program. Each of these activities has the potential to be self-sustaining, while the first two may generate additional income for the organization as well.

First, a labor intensive business venture will be established. The business will be a profit-making subsidiary of the American Indian Community House. The company will start with approximately ten workers and will have the potential for long-term growth. If it is successful, other businesses will be undertaken. The Center for Community Economic Development of the Community Service Society is currently conducting an assessment of possible products which can effectively utilize an Indian trademark for marketing purposes.

Second, an Indian Cultural Center will be established in a location that is generally accessible by public transportation. The basis for this Center already exists with the theatre and gallery. However, both of these programs have limited visibility in the Indian Community. As noted earlier, both of these programs already are doing well financially. Combining them in one facility would be cost efficient and give both activities a much higher profile.

In addition, the Native American community has no place to congregate, to meet as individuals or as tribes, or to eat their own ethnic foods. The theatre space can be creatively used to provide this kind of space as well. This would be a major contribution to reducing the alienation of New York City life for its resident Indians. Technical assistance in determining the space and design needs for the facility is being provided by the Pratt Institute Center for Community Development.

Third, the Community House will develop a community-based residence for homeless Indians in the City. Such a residence will not only provide shelter but will be operated consistent with Indian traditions. Technical assistance for this kind of shelter has been formally requested from the Shelter Development Project at the Community Service Society.

Taken together, these projects represent a major step for the American Indian Community House to move beyond short-term survival and funding for referral and treatment. Each of the projects responds to a fundamental concern of the New York City Indian population. In so far as possible, they will be geographically located near each other. For the first time in its history, the Community House will be fostering a long-term development capacity for its constituency, in addition to its needed social services. This capacity will ultimately be separately incorporated as a CDC, affiliated with the AICH.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

The American Indian Community House is a \$1.3 million dollar human service agency that has consistently grown since its inception in 1969. In addition to its funded programs, it is operating a major income generating venture with a craft shop and gallery that brings in \$37,500 for the organization. The Board of Directors is broad-based, and consists of 15 members. They represent the following tribes; Lakota, Atzec, Eastern Band Cherokee, Caughnawaga Mohawk, Shinnecock, Winnebago, Six Nations Mohawk and Delaware. An Advisory Board for the Community Economic Development Program has been established consisting of AICH Board members and partially of other New York City Indian residents.

The Coordinator of the Program, Sharon Hunt has been on the staff of AICH for the past year, in the dual capacity of Director of Social Services and Coordinator for Community Economic Development. Ms. Hunt has extensive experience in community organizing and development and recently completed a graduate degree program in the field. Initially, she will be assisted by both paid and pro bono technical consultants. Both the Pratt Center for Community Development and Community Service Society are currently providing technical assistance without a fee. Mr. Michael Crawford will be working as a business planner with the Community Economic Development Program. Mr. Crawford brings years of business and fund raising experience to AICH and together Ms. Hunt and Mr. Crawford will serve as the Community Economic Development team.

AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY HOUSE

CURRENT PROGRAMS

Job Training - AICH is the prime sponsor of the Jobs Training and Partnership Act for Native Americans in the New York metropolitan area. The programs offer counseling, vocational training, adult basic education and higher education preparation. Approximately 375 Indians are served in the program annually with 40% placed in private sector jobs and 40% go into training or higher education.

Indian Health - The AICH Health Program offers primary medical and dental care services on a referral basis as well as limited treatment services. It also sponsors health education forum for the Indian community. In 1982, the program had 2,641 visits from the Indian community. The program is federally funded Indian Health Service.

Substance Abuse - The Substance Abuse Program provides information and referral services for American Indians and families as well as provides resource materials for agencies and professionals serving Indians. A Hotline service is provided and a newsletter, "Small Trails", is published. The program also maintains a resource library for use by people working with Indian populations throughout the State. It is funded by the New York State Division of Substance Abuse.

Native Americans in the Arts (ANIA) - was created as a theatre group in late 1979 to present American Indian Artists and their works to the general public. It is only one of two American Indian theater companies nationwide. The National Endowment for the Arts has funded the group to produce a "living history" play for the current season.

Gallery and Craft Shop - The Gallery and Craft Shop is a visual arts program that presents five to six exhibitions of contemporary American Indian Art each year. Last year, it also presented two major exhibits of traditional arts and crafts. The Shop had gross sales last year of \$37,500.

Social Services - The Social Services Department was established in 1983 to meet the emergency food and shelter needs of the American Indian population in New York City. The Department has a food pantry which is stocked with traditional foods and can provide emergency shelter for a maximum of ten days for homeless people. It also provides advocacy services for American Indian residents.