

1997 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 1999

This project was supported Mn Future Resources Fund.

Title: Environmental Awareness Through Living History

Project Manager: Raymon Nyberg

Organization: White Oak Society, Inc.

Mailing Address: 33155 State Highway 6, Deer River, MN 56636-0306

Web Site Address: <http://www.whiteoak.org>

Legal Citation: ML 97, Chap. 216, Sec. 15, Subd. 5(e).

Appropriation Amount: \$120,000

JUL 01 1999

Statement of Objectives

The project was intended to create a dynamic curriculum that fosters learning about environmental issues within ongoing multi-cultural, historical and social contexts.

The project was intended to serve a total of 5,200 students (K-12) over two years through a multi-day residential program and a one day (on- or off-site) program.

Overall Project Results

The project produced a curriculum with a wide mix of components adaptable for use in a variety of educational programs and settings. Accompanying the curriculum was a guide for its use by class room teachers in meeting Minnesota's graduation standards.

The project provided educational programming to nearly 2,500 K-12 students through the one day program.

The project did not meet its objective for the multi-day residential program due to delays in the construction of the building in which the program was to be delivered and to lack of sufficient interest (or ability to afford) the program.

As it became clear that the residential program was not going to meet its objectives, focus was placed on other educational programs that utilized the curriculum. Emphasis was placed on mixed age (youth - adult) programming on- and off-site. These efforts served over 3,300 persons.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

The curriculum produced by the project is useful not just to White Oak but to any educational program. The curriculum was given to the Minnesota Department of Families, Education and Children. Copies are available to other organizations upon request.

The project results suggest that schools are best suited for day programming either on- or off-site. The expense and logistical aspects of specialized residential programs does not make them attractive to an adequate number of schools to support the programs.

The project results suggest that there is considerable interest in innovative educational programs that immerse students in their subject matter, even if only for short periods of time.

The project results suggest there is considerable interest by adults in environmental and historical education programming that is presented in an innovative, participatory manner.

Date of Report: July 1, 1999
LCMR Work Program Update Report

JUL 01 1999

Date of Next Status Report: N.A.

Date of Workprogram Approval: N.A.

Project Completion Date: June 30, 1999

LCMR Work Program 1997:

I. PROJECT TITLE: A-15 White Oak Learning Center Environmental Awareness Through History

Project Manager: Raymon Nyberg

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Total Biennial Project Budget:

\$ LCMR	\$120,000
\$ LCMR Amount Spent:	\$120,000
\$ LCMR Balance:	\$ 0

A. Legal Citation: ML 97, Chap. 216, Sec. 15, Subd. 5(e).

This appropriation is from the future resources fund to the Commissioner of Natural Resources for an agreement with the White Oak Society, Inc., to create an education program integrating environmental education into historical, cultural and social contexts.

II. Project Summary and Results: This project uses a reconstructed historical site and an accompanying learning center/dormitory facility as the location for an educational facility at which living history becomes a tool for teaching the changing interaction between people and the environment. Learning programs stress hands-on, multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural processes. Many of the programs utilize group problem solving techniques.

During 1997 White Oak was to finalize its curriculum, undertake a multi-faceted marketing effort, secure staff, order and set up equipment and instructional materials, conduct educational programs, and perform ongoing evaluations of performance and outcomes. A year-end evaluation would provide the basis for appropriate modifications to curriculum and operations for the 1998 year.

Educational programs would utilize the soon-to-be constructed White Oak Educational Building (funded in part through a prior State bonding bill) and the existing White Oak facility (includes replica fur post, nature trail, and adjacent grounds).

Several target populations were to be served by the project. The primary student population to be served by the proposed program consisted of students in middle and high school alternative learning centers. Other populations served by White Oak programs include elementary and middle school students, elderhostel, and the general public.

III. Progress Summary: The following progress has been made during this time period:

General.

The project showed mixed results. The intended primary program—overnight multiple day stays—was significantly impacted by the slowness in receiving necessary operating permits for the Learning Centre

structure (funded with non-LCMR sources). Although White Oak received approvals from the State agency overseeing the construction project, the design/build firm retained by White Oak failed to deliver the building in a proper manner resulting in Fire and Health officials delaying their final approvals. Temporary approvals have allowed White Oak to use the building for most of its intended purposes.

The delay in having a structure ready to house the primary program caused two things to happen. First, we had to delay active marketing of the overnight program. Second, we placed additional emphasis on our other educational programs.

Despite a multi-faceted marketing effort conducted over several years, White Oak did not succeed in attracting the alternative learning center student market. Strong interest was shown at the alternative education program conferences we attended and several schools indicated a desire to bring students to the site. However, none signed up for the overnight program. Increased attention was then placed on attracting the general K-12 student population to the overnight program. White Oak attended conferences for both elementary and secondary schools and distributed marketing materials to schools. This generated more interest, but to date no schools have signed on for the overnight program.

As noted, we then placed even greater attention on our one-day on-site (*Ignite Me*) and off-site (*en Derouine*) programs for students and on our mixed population (all ages) programs. These programs have been well received and, in fact, 1999 has been our most successful year as a result.

In all cases, the curriculum developed by White Oak under the LCMR project has been the foundation for all our educational programs. The flexibility of the curriculum allows us to apply it a variety of formats and settings. We continue to add to the curriculum.

Our marketing program was aggressive. It included:

- Participation in the Minnesota Association of Alternative Program conferences giving workshops, presenting materials, and making a dinner speech.
- A short video highlighting White Oak's educational programs that was distributed to schools and individual teachers.
- Packet of written materials explaining our program (produced under another funding source).
- Attendance at state conferences for secondary and elementary principals.
- Use of our web site.
- Cross marketing of one program through another program.

We learned that it is necessary to contact both administrative and teachers with marketing materials especially for programs requiring relatively large expenditures for participation.

Program cost appears to be a significant factor in decision making process by schools for off-school site programs. As a result, we are emphasizing our *en Derouine* program which provides the educational experience at the school. We are also emphasizing our *Ignite Me* one-day on-site program. Both are being used to cross market the overnight program.

It appears that our youth-oriented programming appeals to all ages but in greatest numbers for upper elementary and lower middle school grades. We need to modify our approach for high school age students.

There are many applications of our curriculum for adults and we are pursuing this area.

IV. Outline of Project Results:

Result 1: Finalize an innovative program that fosters learning about environmental issues within ongoing multi-cultural, historical and social contexts.

LCMR Budget: \$10,000	Balance:	\$ 0
Match: \$ N.A.	Balance:	\$ N.A.
Completion Date: November 1, 1997		

The curriculum for the core residential program was created. Full copies were provided to the Minnesota Department of Children, Family and Education.

The flexibility of the core curriculum allows White Oak to use for a variety of programs. It is the basis for the extended overnight program but also provides the foundation for on-site and off-site day long programs.

The final amounts of teacher aids, student props and supplies were acquired. The list includes clothing for historic role playing, books, historic games, and the like.

Result 2: Reach 3,100 students (7-12 grades) with the primary alternative education curriculum and 2,100 (K-6) with a history-oriented curriculum over the two year period.

LCMR Budget: \$110,000 Balance: \$ 0
Match: \$ N.A. Balance: \$ N.A.
Completion Date: June 30, 1999

"Result 2" derives from the application of the curriculum designed and completed in "Result 1". "Result 2" will be generated by:

- 84 2-night/3-day sessions (*Dunk Me* program) serving 3,400 students over the two years of the LCMR grant.
- 2 Spring School Day (*Ignite Me* program) events each serving an average of 1,050 students over a 4-5 day period.

The numerical results of the educational programming conducted by White Oak during the LCMR grant period using the curriculum generated by the project include:

Program	# of Persons Served
<i>Ignite Me</i> on-site programming for grades K-12*	2,497
<i>Dunk Me</i> on-site multiple day program**	11
<i>en Derouine</i> mixed age program	2,950
Mixed age workshops/programming	368
Total	5,826

* The 1,552 students in 1999 was our most successful year ever.

** These students were the test run done with Deer River middle school students.

As noted in the prior section, the delays which affected our *Dunk Me* program prompted us to place greater emphasis on other programming. Thus, the table above shows figures for our mixed age (youth to adult) educational programming which utilizes the curriculum designed under the LCMR grant.

V. Dissemination: As noted in a prior section, White Oak used a variety of methods to disseminate its curriculum and to market its educational programs. These included: participation at state-wide conferences for educators and principals; use of our web page; printed materials (produced under another funding source but promoting the programs generated under the LCMR grant); direct mail to educators; cross marketing of programs.

White Oak's curriculum and associated guide to its use relative to Minnesota's graduation standards is available to other residential learning facilities and schools. Copies have been provided to the Minnesota Department of Family, Education and Children.

VI. Context:

A. Significance: The GreenPrint report identified outcomes for K-12 environmental education to be achieved through a variety of educational entities and venues. Among these are: develop critical thinking skills to be able to understand opposing views in issues that affect the environment; develop personal appreciation, sensitivity and stewardship for the environment; and be aware of the effects of personal decisions and actions on the local and global environment. GreenPrint also identified specific K-12 needs including: student access to a variety of learning sites beyond the classroom; teachers prepared to teach environmental education content and concepts using experiential teaching methodology; and inclusive programs that deal appropriately with multi-cultural learning situations and learning opportunities that successfully address the needs of students with varying abilities.

White Oak's program will not duplicate those of Minnesota's Environmental Learning Centers.

The proposed "Environmental Awareness Through History" program is an innovative educational concept specially geared for students. It combines Minnesota history with environmental education components. The program is a far-reaching multi-disciplinary effort that uses role playing and living history [where individuals adopt historic roles complete with props, food, social setting, utensils and the like] techniques to interest and excite students of varying abilities to become active learners.

The White Oak Learning Centre will use living history to provide multiple disciplinary learning opportunities for students of all ages, skill and aptitude. Students will be immersed into living history where directly experiencing the past becomes the key to activating the learning process. The program encourages learning through experience. We place emphasis on small groups with intensive individual interaction and direct involvement.

The environmental component of the proposed "Environmental Awareness through History" program highlights the critical nexus of social/historical processes and our relationship with the natural world. The multi-cultural, living history perspective of the program focuses on how different cultures view the natural environment and how those views can evolve over time. Activities of the past become lessons for the future.

The proposed program, with its use of living history as a setting and as a teaching method, offers an innovative means of exciting students about learning and encouraging them to view education as a life-long activity not just confined to formal educational settings.

B. Time: The project will not exceed two years. However, the LCMR-funded project prepares the foundation for the Centre's residential educational program which is designed to be financially self-sufficient once past the start-up stage. This program is intended to be ongoing.

C. Budget Context: This project takes advantage of nearly 10 years of investment and hard work to create both a facility and a program capable of supporting this endeavor. The project utilizes a recreated fur post that has been built with approximately \$200,000 of support from the Blandin Foundation and more than \$250,000 of in-kind, cash donation, and volunteer labor. The State has contributed to the facility through a \$340,000 investment through the 1994 bonding bill which is financing the construction of the learning center facility and a complementary campground. This facility will be under construction this year and completed by early Fall 1997.

The learning center facility consists of the following spaces: two dormitory rooms for students and two smaller rooms for visiting teachers; large hall that combines as dining area/meeting space/education space; library/research center; office; kitchen; baths and showers.

In addition to this indoor space, White Oak programs will make extensive use of the recreated fur post, mile-long Gil Quaal Nature Trail, and the outdoor setting of the site for the conduct of many of its programs. There is also a campground on the site which can be used to provide lodging space for people attending other Centre educational programs that will make use of the curriculum developed under this project.

For the past 6 years, the White Oak Society has conducted School Days history sessions at the fur post

site. Averaging 1200 students per year this program has generated roughly \$35,000 in fee-based revenues while giving school children hands-on experiences with their history. The lessons of these sessions have been important to the creation of the new center's educational programming.

White Oak's initial request was for \$202,500. As per the proposed appropriation, the request has been scaled back to \$120,000. The White Oak Centre is a fee-based operation and is intended to be financially self-sufficient by the end of FY98. The LCMR funds in this appropriation are designed to support the facility during its start-up phase and will be expended on a sliding scale basis. During FY97 we anticipate spending: 60% of the LCMR funds designated for personnel; 90% of the amount designated for equipment; and 100% of the "other" funds. The remainder will be spent in FY98, at which time student fees will cover the rest of the program's costs. Fees will be based upon the typical rates used by the Environmental Learning Centers with allowances for the generally smaller class sizes to be used at White Oak (this is to accommodate the special needs and teaching style of the typical alternative learning center). Fees are expected to run \$70-85 per student per 3-day session.

	July 1995-1997 Prior expenditures on this project	July 1997-1999 Proposed expenditures for this project	July 1999-2001 Future expenditures on this project
1. LCMR		\$120,000	
2. Other State	\$340,000		
3. Non State Cash	\$60,000	\$264,000	\$488,000
Total:	\$400,000	\$384,000	\$488,000

Note: \$340,000 in July 1995-97 of State funds was from 1994 bonding bill to build the White Oak Learning Centre facility.

The following table summarizes the expenditures over the two years of the LCMR grant. The \$52,000 in "Personnel" costs are to be allocated as follows: \$39,000 to assist with salaries for 2 instructors, 1-2 interns, and historic skill specialists. The remaining \$13,000 will help underwrite salaries for the White Oak executive director (for work done at the Learning Centre), the Learning Centre director, and staff used to develop curriculum.

<u>Budget:</u>		Amount
Personnel		\$52,000
Instructors	\$39,000	
Administrative	\$13,000	
Equipment*		\$43,500
Furniture/storage	\$18,000	
VCR/Projection	\$4,400	
Computer equipment/software	\$3,500	
Student props and equipment	\$5,500	
Teaching aids	\$1,000	
Snow removal equipment	\$2,000	
Portable heaters	\$1,500	
Vault toilets	\$3,600	
Education Room/ Library fixtures	\$4,000	
Acquisition		\$0
Development		\$0
Other:		\$24,500
Educational & student supplies	\$7,500	
Utilities	\$8,000	
Promotional materials	\$2,500	
Dormitory food	\$5,000	
Cleaning/maintenance supplies	\$1,500	
Total		\$120,000

Description of Equipment and Capital Expenditures:

Furniture/Storage: Tables, chairs, and lighting for the main education room; no one item in this listing will cost more than \$3,500. Inside storage space (trunks or lockers) for students and visiting teachers; no one item to cost more than \$3,500. Storage structure—small storage structure for site equipment, outdoor education gear, and the like; this structure may cost more than \$3,500; the Society anticipates that the structure will be used for the entirety of its useful life for its intended purpose at the Learning Centre.

VCR/Projection: Large screen projection equipment for presentation of videos to classes. This also includes an overhead projector. It is possible that one piece of this package may cost more than \$3,500. White Oak anticipates that this equipment will be used for its entire useful life for educational programming at the Learning Centre.

Computer Equipment/Software: Two computers for library research, Internet access, student work, and the like. Specialized software for library.

Student Props and Equipment: Items to support curriculum (e.g., clothing such as hats, sashes, capotes, aprons and similar items possibly including snowshoes, paddles, etc.).

Teaching Aids: Non-consumable items used in classes (e.g., historic kettles).

Snow Removal Equipment / Portable Heaters / Vault Toilets: This equipment is essential to enable winter programming at the White Oak site. Although much of the educational activity will occur in the educational building, a considerable amount will take place on the grounds of the replica fur post. The post is approximately one-quarter mile from the education building (see site map). None of the buildings have adequate heat sources to maintain reasonably comfortable environments for classes. Thus, a heavy duty snowblower is critical to maintain paths from the education building to and around the post during winter. The portable heaters are needed to make existing structures suitable for class space. The vault toilets (to be only partially funded with LCMR support) are needed on the grounds of the fur post and near the nature trail for use by students and staff (up until this time summer time programming has used temporary portable toilets in these areas).

Education Room/Library Fixtures: Tables, shelving, chairs and lighting for the library and education room.

VII. Cooperation: Three entities will cooperate with White Oak in the development and implementation of this program. They are:

- Sally Becker (Community Education) / ISD 317 (Deer River): assist with curriculum development and provide liaison with schools.
- Mayor Bob Lundeen / City of Deer River: cooperate in the development and maintenance of the physical plant (which is owned by the City and managed by the White Oak Society).
- Gary Fritz / US Forest Service (Chippewa National Forest, Deer River): assist with curriculum development and provide advice for operations.

Each of the cooperators will be represented on the White Oak Learning Centre's Advisory Board. The Board will also have representatives from other educational institutions, the financial community, and environmental interests. Two specific members of the Advisory Board will be a representative from a regional Environmental Learning Center (advice on curriculum, operation of a residential educational facility, and avoiding redundant curriculum) and the local historical society (advice on curriculum and resources).

None of the cooperators will receive any direct LCMR project dollars.

VIII. Location: A map showing the location of the White Oak Learning Centre facility is contained in the brochure in Attachment I.

IX. Reporting Requirements: Periodic workprogram progress reports will be submitted on or by: January 5, 1998 and July 1, 1998. A final workprogram progress report and final report will be required by June 30, 1999, or by the completion date as set in the appropriation.

X. For Research Projects: Not applicable.

Attachment I

The following is a preliminary brochure used by the White Oak Learning Centre to initiate discussions

with schools potentially interested in the new educational programs. In the near future, the Society will upgrade this information piece and prepare additional materials specifically geared to the proposed program.

The brochure contains a map showing the general location of the White Oak facility. Also included is a rough site map of the entire site.

Attachment II: Detailed Budget

The following table presents the project budget by project result.

Attachment III: Schedule of Work

Following the detailed budget is a matrix showing the proposed schedule of work for the two years of the project. It is organized by Result 1, Result 2 and Administration.

Attachment II / Detailed Budget

Detailed Budget / White Oak Learning Centre			
	Result 1	Result 2	Total
Personnel			
Instructors		\$39,000	\$39,000
Administrative	\$3,500	\$9,500	\$13,000
Equipment			
Furniture/storage		\$18,000	\$18,000
VCR/Projection		\$4,400	\$4,400
Computer equipment/software		\$3,500	\$3,500
Student props and equipment	\$5,500		\$5,500
Teaching aids	\$1,000		\$1,000
Snow removal equipment		\$2,000	\$2,000
Portable heaters		\$1,500	\$1,500
Vault toilets		\$3,600	\$3,600
Education Room/ Library fixtures		\$4,000	\$4,000
Acquisition			\$0
Development			\$0
Other:			
Educational & student supplies		\$7,500	\$7,500
Utilities		\$8,000	\$8,000
Promotional materials		\$2,500	\$2,500
Dormitory food		\$5,000	\$5,000
Cleaning/maintenance supplies		\$1,500	\$1,500
Total	\$10,000	\$110,000	\$120,000