

1999 Annual Report Executive Summary

Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community

The Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community, Inc. (NiiJii) was notified of the Grant Award in December 1998 and signed the Memorandum Of Agreement with USDA/RD on August 12, 1999. Although this is only our first year as a designated EC we have made considerable strides in NiiJii organizational framework, local resource allocation to NiiJii, local project implementation and citizen participation.

An independent State chartered corporation was created to best represent the human and geographic diversity of the EC. NiiJii also successfully achieved IRS non-profit status as a 501©3 in July 1999. A Board of Directors was created to equally represent the three Tribal governments and the three developable site partners. During the year a mechanism was created to stagger terms for the purpose of both retaining continuity and providing for greater diversity in Board structure. Board meetings are scheduled at least monthly, more frequently in the early formative stages, and sites rotate in recognition of the vast geographic area of NiiJii.

During the year local resources allocated to NiiJii have enabled the EC to survive. NiiJii did not receive USDA/RD funding but the dedicated volunteer service of Board Members, in-kind rent, technical assistance, personnel services, supplies and the often-required funds were made available to NiiJii by the member Tribes and developable site partners. This input of resources from an EC with very limited resources underscores the importance for the success of NiiJii by the local participants. We believe very strongly that the EC status and the strong partnership of those entities that comprise NiiJii is an excellent vehicle, and very likely the only vehicle, to eradicate the extreme poverty and address the lack of educational, social and economic opportunity faced by citizens within the Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community.

During this first year of EC designation numerous projects were designed, implemented or achieved that sought to eradicate the extreme poverty and address the lack of educational, social and economic opportunity faced by citizens within the Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community.

The Reservation Resource Service Center is being created in Lac du Flambeau for job training and entrepreneurial services. The concept and plan has been developed, bids for an architect are ready to be solicited, and funding from several different sources has been attained. Construction will begin in the spring of 2000.

The most significant progress for Menominee is the development of an inter-tribal tourism consortium. Early developments of a WholeZone Arts & Crafts Cooperative have transpired by instituting and combining a Youth and Elders Committee into a Menominee Tribal Tourism Committee.

The most significant accomplishment for Mole Lake during 1999 has been our capacity to learn and our faith; the faith that our community has maintained since its application was approved as a full partner in the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community concept.

We shall keep our faith in that promise, which has been given to us, that we shall be empowered.

NiiJii is constantly striving to refine and expand opportunities for input from those citizens NiiJii is designed to assist. We staggered Board terms to allow for a scheduled turnover to allow for new ideas and insights into achieving EC goals. All NiiJii meetings and forums are posted publicly throughout the EC soliciting comments and input. Each NiiJii meeting or forum agenda calls for public input and comments. NiiJii activities are reported to each local area at numerous meetings and other forums. Each Tribe and developable site is establishing a formal mechanism to solicit input on existing NiiJii projects and activities and design future NiiJii initiatives. By Board directive this process will be implemented in 2000.