

## **2002 Annual Report Executive Summary**

### **Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community**

Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community is a unique partnership among three Native American Tribes and eight municipal partners in rural northern Wisconsin. Encompassing only 335,000 square acres of primarily forest Reservation land, the population of 6320 individuals struggles to achieve personal success utilizing some of the lowest levels of income in the Nation. At the outset of the Strategic Plan, median family income averages from six to eleven thousand annually depending on the Reservation examined. Yet, these communities have a big vision (the alleviation of poverty), a big strategic plan (total budget of \$ 92 million), a large number of interested new partners (103), high community involvement (2900) and many ongoing projects (70). Of the \$92 million detailed in benchmarked project budgets, \$36 million has already been received since project implementation began two and a half years ago, bringing these communities one-third of the way toward fulfillment of their strategic plan. The \$500,000 EZ/EC seed funds spent to date have leveraged additional funding at a rate of 72:1.

Partners and community members have brought an additional \$6 million of in-kind resources to the table to date. Including in-kind resources, the seed funds to leveraged resource ratio exceeds 82:1. NiiJii capacity building staff efforts have yielded \$1.9 million in direct resources to benchmark projects. Approximately \$3.4 million in grant applications have been submitted. A success ratio of 11 awards to 7 declines has been achieved.

During the calendar year 2002, the Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community continued its efforts to build sustainable communities by empowering citizens to foster partnerships and mobilize resources for the elimination of poverty for future generations. The following are examples of some of these achievements.

**Building Capacity:** Of the 2900 Community participants engaged in the EC program, 298 were actively engaged in leadership roles in addition to the more than 100 active benchmark and task leaders. 1405 students and residents participated in training programs. 103 new partnerships were created and more than 25 donors agencies coordinated.

**Building Infrastructure:** Four water and sewer projects (BM# 2, 9, 10, 13), three roads projects (BM# 3, 11, 12), and street lighting (BM# 33) improvements have been completed to expand and support Reservation economic development efforts. New retail and office space has been constructed (BM# 7) and an industrial park has been expanded (BM# 49).

**Building an Economic Base:** Two hundred seventeen businesses were assisted with support, planning or loans (BM# 14, 24, 42, 46, 50, 52, 54). Two hundred thirty one jobs were created or retained throughout the 70 projects implemented. \$90,000 in personal savings was generated (BM# 14).

And, the best is yet to come. Many more exciting projects are just beginning to launch, and will ultimately lead to the fulfillment of the vision of these NiiJii communities...the alleviation of poverty for future generations. NiiJii means good friends in the Ojibwa language and aspires to be the essence of combating poverty through partnership.