

2006 NRE MID-YEAR REPORT NEBRASKA INDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Report by: Hank Miller



The NR program at NICC has been busy with classes, grant proposal writing and planning spring projects.

This semester's classes, Forestry and Ecology, have been exciting with positive student participation and enthusiasm. We recently attended a holistic grazing workshop hosted by our county extension agent which featured an internationally recognized grazier from Australia. The bulk of the workshop addressed a holistic approach to prairie development by using ecologically sound grazing practices that are economically profitable. I am also teaching a HPR-290 class, "Healthy Holistic Walk with Nature," which has inspired several students to become involved in natural resource classes. Current natural resource students are doing well and are excited about the up-coming spring projects.

Prairie Restoration

We plan to plant an additional 36 acres to native prairie this year with a variety of native grasses, wildflowers and forbes. We currently have 12 acres at the new Macy campus site that is going into the third year of development. We will begin harvesting wildflowers for fresh-cut flowers, landscaping plugs and seed collection as well as woody florals within the riparian buffer zone at this location. We also have 7 acres in the second year of development and another 40 acres of non-native hay ground that we are in the process of restoring to native grasses. Up to this point we have incorporated mowing as a management technique and plan to begin grazing practices next year. We will follow the grazing up with sod-buster seeding of many more varieties of native plants. We recently met with the Nebraska Legacy Organization. They appear to be willing to help us enhance our number of native plant species in our prairie restoration projects.

Riparian Buffers

We have ordered several different types of trees for the riparian buffer development project at the Macy and Santee sites. The riparian buffers will contain woody florals, fruit and nut trees, as well as a variety of hard woods. We feel this will help with water quality and soil erosion as well as provide economic opportunities. UNL has been instrumental in the success of our woody floral, and tree plantings both in riparian buffers and cultivated areas.

Woody Florals, Fruits and Nut Trees

A variety of woody florals and nut trees will be planted and maintained in a controlled setting thus ensuring more economic gain. An estimated 200 plants will be planted this spring. Another 60 fruit trees will be planted on the campuses as well as throughout the community. We plan to market the fruit in addition to promoting and providing healthy food sources for the community.

Community Gardens

Our community garden at Santee will be planted the first week of May. With the continued assistance from SDSU's Chris Z., and Iowa State's Barb O., this project shows great promise. Marketing plans are in place and we look forward to selling produce and preserving the excess to make available to the communities we serve. We are also planning workshops within both communities to recruit 10 participants per location, to develop their own gardens. There will be follow-up workshops mid-season and at harvest-time and marketing assistance will be provided.

Prairie Ph Program

Through the help of SDSU and the prairie Ph program, I am hoping to graduate this summer. Several SDSU staff have become great resources for our natural resource program.

Grant Writing

NICC has been fortunate to recruit Lisa Hare to help the Natural Resource Dept. write grant proposals. We have written three and have two more in the works. Each of these grants fit well with projects already in place and we are optimistic about further development and expansion of our natural resource program.

I want to thank everyone within the program for all their help, advice and support. The relationships that have formed through this NRE project have been incredibly valuable to me both professionally and personally.