

## Staff Development Grant Final Report

Gary Loch, St. Cloud Technical College Diversity Coordinator

Project: Comprehensive Diversity Events,

### Description:

Academic year 2008/2009 St. Cloud Technical College, used the \$5000.00, MNSCU, Staff Development Grant to develop a campus wide campaign promoting appreciation for the many faces and multiple facets of Diversity. Our events focused on the value of “your story”, as Peg McIntosh says, “your story, the developing history or herstory of you becoming visible to yourself and others as a body in the body of the world.” Five different events presented months apart: the Aztec Dancers featuring Susanna de Leon as “Ketzalcoaticue”, the NuWay Baptist Church Music Ministry, the Ancestor Energy Jazz and Spoken Word Ensemble, Clyde Bellacourt Co-founder of AIM, Susan Doering ELL Coordinator. One thousand three hundred and fifty members of the SCTC community participated in these events. Each production focused on a very unique, personal, spiritual connection to the energy of life itself, the human story. The objective or outcome varied from economics, language, to art reflects culture. Every performance touching every member of it’s audience with the thread of human commonality or the value and texture of our difference. Evaluations were accomplished via simple email surveys. We are looking forward to applying again only this time moving from appreciation and awareness to a greater understanding and command of cultural competency.

### Summary:

The Aztec Dancers, Ketzalcoaticue,

Project re-cap: We kicked off our series of events with this group at the request of our Latino/Latina Student Organization who wanted to celebrate culture and share heritage with the SCTC community. Susanna deLeon has organized this dance group as a vehicle for teaching culture to both Latino and non-Latino people. Her introduction and continuous descriptions of the instruments, the rhythm, the intent of the dancers in mind and movement, and the regalia, was incredibly helpful. Susanna and her Aztec Dancers stayed with us until all questions were asked and answered.

Impact: People who responded to the simple survey agreed that they had been witness too a cultural event that was as well explained as it was rehearsed and researched. People said that they had felt honored by being allowed to be present. The event was breath taking and witnessed by approximately two hundred people.

Reflection: No one knew what to expect. Students asked “why haven’t we done this before?”, There were only positive comments about the performance. Regrets were expressed that we don’t have a suitable performance space for events of this caliber and nature. I think of the event every time I walk through the Atrium area where the dancers performed.

Cost: \$850.00

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NuWay Baptist Church Music Ministry:

Project re-cap: As the African American presence has increased in the St. Cloud community several attempts have been made at organizing a community that represents the spiritual base and political, social justice, thrust of the Black Church in America. The most successful of these attempts has become the NuWay Baptist Church. The Music Ministry has become one of the most impressive groups to perform at diversity events through out the Midwest. The NuWau Choir performed traditional Gospel chorals in the manner of a living artifact of the musical, historical expressions, and individual testimonies of historically oppressed people.

Impact: The choir, soloists and the director gave us song as stories from the hearts and souls of real people. The vocal power, edgy harmonies, gospel beat, and words ripped right from the heart and souls of oppressed people seeking solace and comfort from their God. There was never enough applause to adequately thank the choir. All who experienced this performance in the SCTC Atrium felt “truly blessed.” We had two hundred people in attendance.

Reflection: This wasn’t just another Black History Month production. I believe we need to support every one where ever they start but every month is Black History month. As people listened to this burst of vitality and the sacredness of their historical traditions people didn’t know how to react in the audience. Slowly they started to sway, clap their hands and maybe even dance a little. One comment in the survey was phenomenal, “we saw people celebrating the “other America” a different manner of prayer and comfort seeking, It was new and it was great.”

Cost: \$250.00

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Clyde Bellacourt:

Project re-cap: Clyde Bellacourt, Co-founder of the American Indian movement, witness to Wounded Knee, the Occupation of Alcatraz and The Bureau of Indian Affairs, and many other significant events of the late 60’s early 70’s, bringing to the public attention the plight and poverty of American Indian people. Clyde spoke of these events as well as the legislation, Protection of American Indian Children Act, or the work to legalize American Indian spiritual practice. Aside from the many stories about his own life he spoke about many authors and writers who speak correctly, and authentically about American Indian History. Clyde spoke to three smaller groups of students, faculty, and staff, and to one larger group of people in our cafeteria. There were about three hundred and fifty people who were able to hear this man.

Impact: It was clear that people were hearing this vantage point of American History for the first time. It was also obvious to students, faculty and staff that they were in the presence of an individual who was politically, historically, spiritually significant, and relevant as a civil rights and social justice entity. Clyde is a powerful presence.

Reflection: The day was sacred. We need to do more events like this, Bringing people right out of the pages of recent history to talk directly to students in our Human Relations theme classes. We also need an American Indian Studies class. We need to be as focused upon the success of our American Indian students as Clyde was. This was a great day.

Cost: \$850.00

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Susan Doering, ELL Specialist

Project re-cap: Our refugee and immigrant population is increasing in the community at large and within the enrollment of SCTC. Most of our refugee and immigrant population has experienced some level of ELL or ESL curriculum through local school districts. All of our faculty need to be introduced to introductions to curriculum and best practices in ELL pedagogy, such as SIOP, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol. This is a simple practice that allows med-level ell students to successfully participate in mainstream curriculum content and learn the English Language of the discipline. Sue is a master of Ell best practices, SIOP, and The Culture of Poverty Curriculum by Ruby Payne. Her presentation focused on the impact of SIOP and poverty on ELL students.

Impact: SCTC faculty and staff are incredible, professional people. Sometimes we forget that the manner of, and the structure of, the way we always do things might be perceived as a barrier to some of the new people in our community. We need to find ways to be more inclusive. Sue Doering demonstrated several avenues of research for three hundred faculty and staff interested in opening their doors just a little wider to some of our under served, underrepresented newcomers.

Reflection: This presentation was a giant step in doing the right thing at the right time. We are recruiting constantly. Unless we integrate SIOP into our programs we will not be as successful at the level of retention we also need. Beyond that we need to create the opportunities for forums and focus groups to hear directly from our new students about the barriers that are invisible to us and intimidating to them.

Cost: \$300.00

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Ancestor Energy:

Project re-cap: Ancestor Energy is a seven member, Jazz and Spoken Word, Ensemble, who have been playing together for the last thirty years. The poetry, spoken word, lyrics, music and percussion are their personal reaction to history, life, love, and reflection about their lives and the histories of African American, Latino American, American Indian, and European White, people, in America. In the two hours they performed we had three hundred people celebrating the end of the semester, stop in and enjoy the jazz.

Impact: Jazz was new to some people. Another comment focused on not knowing that spoken word could be different from rap or hip hop. There were many favorable comments on the nature of the

event, a concert, and the quality of the music. There were many expressions of gratitude and hopes for repeat performances of this caliber.

Reflection: The event was successful. A cafeteria can be made to be ok, an auditorium would be better. The universal language of music, lyrics and content reflecting our commonalities and the spice of our difference, works every time. The group was comfortable with the space and the audience, overwhelmingly enjoyed the group. We need to do more of this.

Cost: \$2,750.00

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Thank you for your generous support of the \$5000.00 that made these events possible. I should tell you also that in between these five events we had a number of panels and several speakers that shared events from their lives, and their stories, who contributed to our series of events as well as enriching the lives of our students, faculty and staff. It is obvious to us that we have a strong, receptive base of understanding about diversity. Our request for next year will focus more upon developing competencies. This is most important for our staff, who I know always mean well with their efficiencies and some times don't understand that what we perceive as efficient might be perceived as a road block or a barrier. The competency that we are looking to develop will be developmental steps, not to be embarrassed about what you don't know.