

Seven prophets came to the Anishinabe at a time when the people were living a full and peaceful life on the North Eastern coast of North America. These prophets left the people with seven predictions of what the future would bring. Each of the prophecies was called a fire and each fire referred to a particular era of time that would come in the future. Thus, the teachings of the seven prophets are now called the "Seven Fires".

The First through the Third prophecies told of various migrations and cultural followings of the tribal nation.

The Fourth through the Sixth prophecies told of the coming of the light skinned race... A time of great struggle that will grip the lives of all native people... and of a time when grandsons and granddaughters will turn against the Elders..."The cup of life will almost become the cup of grief."

The seventh prophet that came to the people long ago was said to be different from the other prophets. He was young and had a strange light in his eyes. He said, "In the time of the Seventh Fire New People will emerge... They will retrace their steps to find what was left by the trail... There will be a rebirth of the Anishinabe Nation and a rekindling of old flames.



The Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and final Fire, an eternal fire of peace, love brotherhood and sisterhood.

: *The Voice of the Ojibway* by Edward Benton-Banai. Printed in St. Paul, Minn. Published by Indian Country Press, copyright 1979.

<http://www.sunsinger.com/related/fires.shtml>



The Seventh Fire



Reconnecting Youth to Math, Science and The Ojibwe Cultural Traditions

White Earth Reservation
Summer Program for Math & Science



For generations, the Ojibwe Indians have lived in what is now northern Minnesota, Their way of life, making birch bark canoes, processing the wild rice and the maple sap and calculating travel distances between summer and winter camps - required precise science and mathematics skills.



In recent years, however, many tribal members, particularly the younger ones, have not followed the traditional way and the complex skills that accompanied many of the traditions have languished. Many of the children, in fact, enter school convinced that

they will fail at math and science and this often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Ojibwe elders, on the White Earth Reservation in northwest Minnesota, were concerned about:

The defeatist attitude among many young residents.

The high drop-out rate among American Indian high school students on the Reservation.

The erosion of connections to their traditions.



In response to these needs, Reservation tribal staff asked the University of Minnesota for help in improving students' academic performance in math and science.

The elders, tribal leaders, Extension and Reservation natural resource managers cooperated to create a program that would help prepare young people to take their places in the complex world we live in by building on the strong foundation of Ojibwe traditions. The natural resources of the Reservation itself—its waters, birds, plants and trees—were used in an attempt to both instill respect and appreciation for the traditional ways while functioning as a vast laboratory in which to experiment and learn about the disciplines of math and science.



The program used a variety of mechanisms to evaluate its effectiveness. They included pre- and post-testing of students using standardized testing instruments, daily journaling by observers who chronicled various items each day, and focus groups with University of Minnesota campus faculty instructors and Reservation planning team members. The program was successful on many levels... As Doug McArthur, a tribal member and Reservation biologist, said, *"The kids here see practical science at work. You can learn it in the classroom, look at a book, but it really doesn't hit home until you get out here-until you actually grab some bugs off a rock and show them."*



Test scores went up in both math and science. Both the University of Minnesota faculty and tribal members gained from the exchange of information and established better connections.

Classes:

- History of White Earth
- Soils of White Earth
- Composting
- Aerospace and Rocketry
- Adventure Initiatives
- Preparing Wild Game
- Identifying Native Plants
- Building Wood Duck Houses
- Nutrition and Diabetes Prevention
- Waterfowl Habitats
- Wild Rice
- Forestry
- Wildlife Habitats
- Canoeing
- Recycling Projects
- Dragonfly Surveys
- ScholarShop™ Career Exploration



Instructors:

- White Earth Elders
- Circle of Life Teachers
- White Earth Tribal Staff
- University of Minnesota faculty and graduate students

Cooperators in this program include:

- Circle of Life School
- Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc.
- University of Minnesota Center for 4-H Youth Development
- College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences
- College of Natural Resources
- Department of American Indian Studies
- Visions for Change
- University of Minnesota Extension Service
- White Earth Reservation Tribal Council
- White Earth Tribal and Community College