

ANA Awards \$900,000 For Karuk Paths To Prosperity

HAPPY CAMP—The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) has awarded \$900,000 to the Karuk Tribe of California for Karuk Paths to Prosperity, a three-year social development project that will enhance educational and employment opportunities in the remote mid-Klamath River communities of Happy Camp (Siskiyou County), Orleans (Humboldt County) as well as Yreka (Siskiyou County). Historically Karuk people have suffered at least two catastrophic disruptions of social and economic systems, including the loss of traditional village subsistence life ways in the late 1800s and, more recently, the collapse of natural-resource-driven economies in the early 1990s. A 2005 survey revealed that 89% of the targeted labor force now lives in poverty, despite the Tribe's best efforts to provide living wage employment and pursue culturally appropriate, sustainable economic development. Among the underlying causes of poverty is low educational attainment, attributed to both financial and geographic barriers. Karuk Paths to Prosperity aims to remove the barriers to postsecondary education and create a renewed sense of hope among Karuk people for a future of their own choosing and their own making.

Since Happy Camp's last sawmill closed in 1994, many displaced timber workers have moved away in search of a better life. A 2005 community survey revealed there is a pervasive belief among remaining residents that our children have to leave this area to find employment because there is no future here. Whether fact or fiction, this perception has resulted in an alarming out-migration of young adults and their children from Siskiyou County as a whole. Population projections by the State of California suggest that without effective interventions, Siskiyou County's population under 19 years of age will decrease by another 19% by the year 2020, while the population over 50 years of age will increase by 30%. The Karuk Tribe noted in its ANA grant application, "We are mindful that without the help of our strong and energetic youthful populations, our growing elderly and disabled populations also are at risk."

With ANA's provision of \$300,000 in each of the next three years, the Karuk Tribe will utilize available computer technology to increase public awareness of the wide array of occupational opportunities that exist within the ancestral territory—and then support individual community members in pursuing essential vocational and professional training through distance learning programs. Through Karuk Paths to Prosperity, the Tribe's Human Resources Department will create a public-access web site that features 100 different jobs ranging from entry-level clerical positions to paraprofessional health, education, family services and natural resources positions, to licensed professional and executive management positions. By converting three community computer centers to distance learning centers—or "virtual college campuses"—the Karuk Tribe will help high school students, unemployed/underemployed community members and Tribal employees to access postsecondary education that previously required relocation outside the ancestral homelands. The new ANA Grant will fund new equipment acquisition, computer center staff, and annual operating expenses. In addition, a new Student Services Coordinator at each distance learning center will provide project participants with career counseling, academic advising, financial aid advising, mentoring and job placement services. Over the next three years, at least 50 Tribal members are expected to earn paraprofessional certificates or Associate's Degrees from accredited community colleges, as a result of which 35 (70%) will realize significant gains in employment, such as initial job placement, increased time base or compensation, or promotion.

The Karuk Tribe of California is pleased to acknowledge the following community partners without whose cash and in-kind contributions the Karuk Paths to Prosperity project would not be possible: Siskiyou Union High School District, Happy Camp High School, College of the Siskiyous (interactive videoconferencing facility in Happy Camp), Happy Camp Community Computer Center, Karuk Community Development Corporation, Community Computer Center of

Orleans, Orleans Elementary School, Karuk Tribal Housing Authority and Siskiyou County Regional Occupational Program. Key personnel in the Karuk Community Development Corporation and Happy Camp Community Computer Center will participate in an ANA grantees' workshop in mid-November, and the Karuk Paths to Prosperity project is expected to be fully operational by December 2006. For more information, contact Project Director Jim Berry at 530/493-5376, or Project Coordinator Rosie Bley at 530/493-5213.