

IMPACT



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Extension Crosses the Divide on Reservation Land Issues

The Situation

Growing public sentiment and legal precedent nationally have supported Coeur d'Alene Tribe efforts to assume greater control of resources on its reservation in northern Idaho. The changing dynamics between tribal and non-tribal management have resulted in controversy and increased tensions in St. Maries and elsewhere in the region. The Tribe's attempts to exercise its sovereignty have often resulted in a climate of hostility fueled by rumors and misinformation.

Our Response

Two extension educators, Valdasue Steele, Benewah County, and Laura Laumatia, CDA Reservation Extension, chose to address the issues by developing a short course, "This is My Land." They applied for and received grant funding from the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) to purchase reference materials and supplies for the course. The course was offered in St. Maries, Idaho, where reservation land issues frequently were the subject of editorial comment in the local media.

The goal of the course was to provide adult community residents with an opportunity to learn an accurate account of Tribal history in order to defuse social and racial tensions in the community. The other intent of the course was to provide an educational platform on which these emotionally

charged issues could be broached. Steele and Laumatia in their role, as UI educators, were placed in the position of being "neutral" and non-political as facilitators for the program.

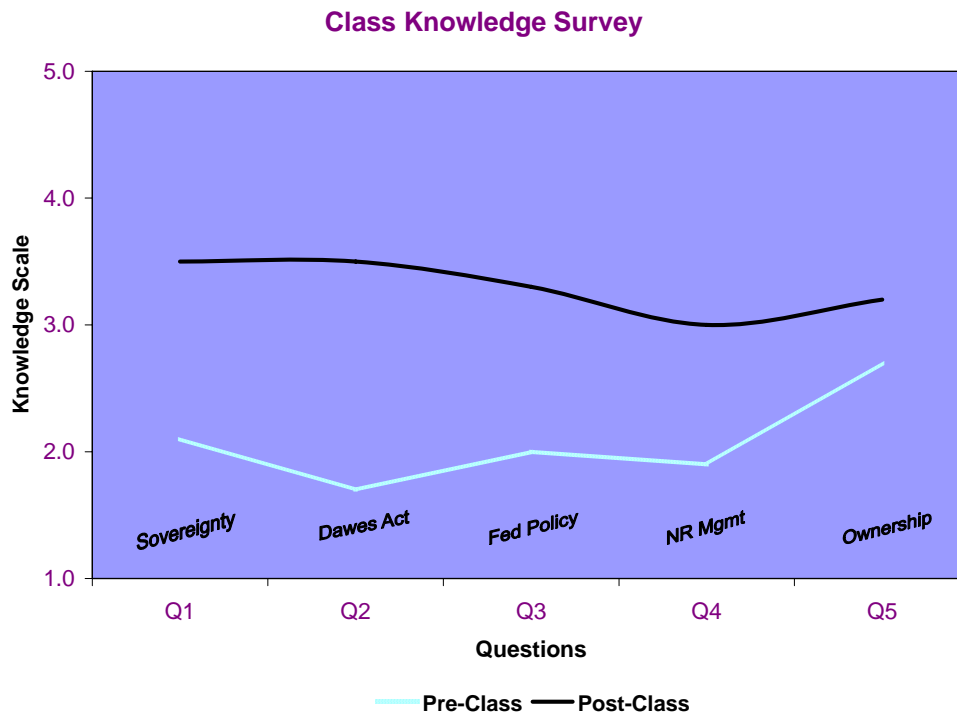
There was a large response from the community. The class filled quickly and several people purchased the class binder even though they could not participate in the course. Notable participants included a county commissioner and county assessors.

The controversy that attends tribal issues in public discussion also reached into the classroom. The educators' challenge was to maintain the class focus on factual information rather than personal views. At the end of the 10-week class, the instructors and the majority of participants felt that the time and effort put into the class were worthwhile.

A pre-class and post-class survey was conducted to determine the participants' knowledge of Indian land issues. Topics included: tribal sovereignty, the Dawes Act, Federal policies related to Indian reservations, natural resource management jurisdiction of tribes, and land ownership on Indian reservations.

Program Outcomes

Participants in the course gained knowledge in all areas covered. The graph below shows the increase in knowledge (1 = poor, 5 = excellent) on the key topics listed above:



The Future

The course is being offered in Plummer beginning February 2006. The success of the course is being shared with other extension educators nationwide at the 2006 NACDEP conference in San Antonio, Texas. Any extension educator who is in close proximity to or is conducting programs in Indian reservation communities can meet local needs with such an educational program. The ILTF curriculum is free and accessible to anyone. Visit its website at: <http://www.indianlandtenure.org/index.html>.

For More Information

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