



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-388

Proposal Title: Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy

Project Manager Information

Name: Erika Bailey-Johnson

Organization: Sacred Bundle

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy aims to increase the opportunity for all Minnesotans to connect to the lands and waters of northern Minnesota through the lens of the Ojibwe worldview.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$934,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2029

LCCMR Funding Category: Education and Outdoor Recreation (C)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): NW, NE, Central,

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

In the face of historic biodiversity loss, climate change, water contamination, and environmental injustices, this project is critical to educating and fostering hope in our communities. In the Mishko Wisitoot Wilderness Academy, participants grow a clearer picture of their role and responsibility as a member of a Community of Life.

Many barriers exist currently to integrate more culturally respectful, place-based education into curriculum. Many teachers lack the knowledge, resources, or connections to integrate this type of education into their teaching. Many feel uncomfortable navigating an Indigenous topic when they are not Indigenous.

The era of digital media and screens has been shown to consume a considerable amount of time in today's society. More screen time has raised serious public health concerns such as increased obesity, sleep disorders, depression, and anxiety. Research has shown that too much time in front of a screen can have a negative impact on the growth of cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional health in young people.

On the other hand, exposure to nature has been linked to multiple benefits. Research has demonstrated over and over again that time in the outdoors can lower stress, improve attention and cognitive development, and even increase empathy and cooperation.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

"Indigenous ways of knowing can fundamentally transform how we teach and learn about our relationship with the natural world." (Indigenous-Led Approaches to Environmental Education: Moving Beyond Integration to Transformation, 2024, eePRO, NAAEE)

This proposal is to create an Indigenous environmental education program called the Mishko Wisitoot Wilderness Academy. We are seeking to connect community to nature, particularly K-12 young people, by offering a year-round schedule of Ojibwe-themed programs, workshops, camps, and training.

We will first spend considerable time gathering partners to find a model that will benefit teachers and learners. During this planning stage, we will visit several environmental learning sites, all with an eye towards indigenizing our program. We will bring one particular program to our Ojibwe community called the Art of Mentoring organized by the Wilderness Awareness School so that our elders and potential staff can easily participate. A peer exchange with Wilderness Awareness School would greatly help us strengthen our participant training strategies and content.

Year two of this project includes goals to effectively communicate our program to stakeholders and train staff. By year three, we will run our first sessions, connecting two-leggeds to the land and waters of northern Minnesota from an Ojibwe perspective.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

Embedded in the Mishko Wisitoot Wilderness Academy will be several project outcomes:

- * Foster collaboration among diverse groups to better protect, conserve, preserve, and enhance the state's natural resources;
- * Enhance environmental education initiatives by integrating Ojibwe perspectives, experiences, and partnerships;
- * Increase understanding and awareness of weather, climate change, water resources, wildlife, plants, renewable energy, especially from an Ojibwe perspective;

* Provide experiential educational opportunities for teachers, students, state and local decision-makers, landowners, and the public on how to improve and protect the water, air, soil, wildlife, and plants that we all share.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Create an Indigenous environmental education program called the Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy.

Activity Budget: \$934,000

Activity Description:

Objective: Increase the opportunity for all Minnesotans to connect to the land and waters of northern Minnesota through the lens of the Ojibwe worldview.

Task 1: Gather partners and visit sites to find an Ojibwe-centered environmental education model that would benefit teachers and learners. The Program Director will connect partners virtually and in-person over the course of the first year to determine how best to begin a new Ojibwe-themed environmental education program.

Task 2: Communicate our program to stakeholders, recruit potential participants, and train staff. The Program Director will work with program staff to locate specific conferences and venues where the Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy would have an audience that could participate in future programming. The Program Director and Field Coordinator will work to train staff for Indigenous outdoor programming.

Task 3: Run a pilot year for the Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy. The Program Director will work with program staff to offer a year-round schedule of Ojibwe-themed programs, workshops, camps, and training, connecting two-leggeds to the land and waters of northern Minnesota through the lens of the Ojibwe worldview.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Gather partners and visit sites	June 30, 2027
Communicate program to stakeholders and train staff	June 30, 2028
Pilot Indigenous environmental education programming	June 30, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Warren Moon	Wilderness Awareness School	Executive Director; Attend meetings, Provide expert input for the creation of an Indigenous environmental education facility, particularly how to integrate the Wilderness Awareness School staff training and philosophy	No
Andrea Lorek Strauss	Minnesota Master Naturalist Program	Extension Educator; Attend meetings, Provide expert input for the creation of an Indigenous environmental education facility, particularly how to integrate the Minnesota Master Naturalist courses	No
JD Tanner	Leave No Trace	Director of Education and Training; Provide expert input for the creation of an Indigenous environmental education facility, particularly how to integrate the Leave No Trace courses	No

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

The results from Tear One's collaboration and gathering of partners will help define how the Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy will be run. This first phase will also help determine how to equitably charge a fee for service to deliver the programming. These fees will then assist in delivering future programming.

The results of this project will be used to create a strong foundation for an Indigenous-focused environmental education center. Results can be shared on the website and through Indigenous education conferences such as the Minnesota Indian Education Association annual conference.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Erika Bailey-Johnson

Job Title: Project Manager

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

Erika Bailey-Johnson is a member of the Red Lake Band of Ojibwe and has several decades of experience leading environmental education programming. Erika's extensive experience and dedication include 16 years as the first Sustainability Director at Bemidji State University (BSU) in Bemidji, Minnesota. She worked in the Ganawendakamigaawigamig (Office of Earth-Caretaking or Sustainability Office). She was also appointed the Coordinator of the People and the Environment academic program in 2016 and taught one class per semester for 20 years, incorporating experiential education in all aspects. She completed her BA in Biology from the University of Minnesota, Morris in 1998 and her Master's degree in Environmental Studies from BSU in 2006. Her background is in science teaching, and Erika and her husband taught for two years in Mexico and three years in Kuwait before returning home to Northern Minnesota. In 2015, Erika was named as one of the top 40 under 40 professionals in the Midwest working to accelerate America's transition to a clean energy economy by Midwest Energy News. She speaks at regional and national conferences on BSU's unique sustainability model which includes a wellness component and an emphasis on integrating Indigenous voices. She served on Governor Dayton's Committee on Pollinator Protection from 2016 to 2018. Erika is currently on the board for Fresh Energy, the Ernest Oberholtzer Foundation, and Happy Dancing Turtle. In 2022, Erika received the Minnesota State Board of Trustees Service Faculty of the Year award. She is a founding member of the City of Bemidji Sustainability Committee, and for the past six years was the founding Director of the Niizhoo-gwayakochigewin project to integrate an Indigenous lens into campus sustainability work and academic programs. She just recently became certified as a Minnesota Master Naturalist instructor.

Organization: Sacred Bundle**Organization Description:**

Sacred Bundle is a tribally chartered IRC 7871 nonprofit organization in accordance with Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe's Title 8 Business Corporation Code, Chapter 2 Nonprofit Corporations. This is a very unique space created by Section 7871(a)(7)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code that can only be occupied by Indigenous organizations allowing them the same nonprofit status of a 501(c)3.

The board, staff, volunteers and partners of Sacred Bundle, Inc., bring more than 500 combined years of dedication, experience, and leadership in designing and implementing community and culturally-based programs. We have three administrative staff, four programmatic staff, and as many as 15 volunteers. We are a culturally-structured organization based on our historic clan systems.

Sacred Bundle has been established as an Ojibwe organization dedicated to serving Ojibwe and other Indigenous families, communities and tribes. In all aspects of our efforts Sacred Bundle is guided by four critical Ojibwe developmental principles:

Gakina-awiiya – We are all related

Gikinoo'amaadiwin – The way to continuing knowledge

Biimaadiziiwin – Our Way of Life

Gwayakochigewin – Doing the right thing, doing the thing right

Intertwined in these principles are two key concepts that are foundational and underpin Indigenous worldview: "All my Relations" and the "Sacred".

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Program Manager		Provide program oversight, staff supervision, and grant reporting			30%	3		\$253,500
Field Coordinator		Provide field support for program staff and coordinating communication with program participants			30%	3		\$195,000
Field Instructor		Provide experiential outdoor programming			30%	2		\$104,000
Field Instructor		Provide experiential outdoor programming			30%	2		\$104,000
Administrative Staff		Support program staff in coordinating background checks and other required procedures			30%	1.5		\$65,400
							Sub Total	\$721,900
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Creation of online tools/website to be used for program navigation				0.1		\$15,000
Wilderness Awareness School	Service Contract	Art of Mentoring workshop, facilitation, and cross-programmatic staff consultation (max of 30 individuals)				0.1		\$50,000
							Sub Total	\$65,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Field Staff program supplies (radios, first aid kits, workshop supplies)	Participant communication, safety, and program participation					\$25,100
							Sub Total	\$25,100
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								

							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	5 visits to MN environmental education centers for 4 people (Lodging, 1 person * \$120/night * 4 nights = \$480) + (Per diem, 1 person * 5 days = \$230) + (Mileage for the 5 trips = .70 * 2360 miles = \$1652)	Visit several environmental learning sites, learn what works and doesn't work for that particular site, all with an eye towards indigenizing our program					\$10,000
							Sub Total	\$10,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Recruitment and Relationship-Building Materials	Share results of research, development, and programs of the Wishko Misitoon Wilderness Academy					\$20,000
		Fleet Vehicles (2 15-passenger vans for 1 yr @ \$36,000/vehicle, either lease or payments on a purchase)	Program participant travel to field location					\$72,000
		Field Staff Training and Development	Orientation, First Aid, CPR, etc.					\$20,000
							Sub Total	\$112,000
							Grand Total	\$934,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Sacred Bundle	Lease of space (\$1000/month for 3 years)	Secured	\$36,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$36,000
			Funds Total	\$36,000

Total Project Cost: \$970,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [dafab29b-561.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Charter documents, Sacred Bundle...

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Authorization Letter, Sacred Bundle	35bd351a-2a7.docx

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Sacred Bundle board-approved financial statements	832e294b-207.docx
Support Letter - Wilderness Awareness School	29c5d3d2-dd5.pdf
Support Letter - Master Naturalist	c779aab5-319.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

No

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

Yes

Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?

Yes

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:

Kim Wake - US Fish and Wildlife Service, certified instructor for the Wilderness Awareness School; Mike Myers - Sacred Bundle; Corey Hamilton - Sacred Bundle, certified instructor for Leave No Trace

Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements

Yes, I understand