

# Laborers Union

## Tribal Partnership Update



CHANGING LIVES - BUILDING FUTURES

April 2007

## CTER and Laborers' LECET Form New Partnership

With over \$200 billion dollars worth of proposed construction projects to be built on or near (within 10 miles) of the country's Indian Reservations, opportunities abound for tribal members willing to acquire a career as a Construction Craft Laborer. That is what John Navarro, President of the Council for Tribal Employment Rights, Ed Hensley, LECET's Northwest Region Construction Representative, have been telling government officials recently.

Pipelines in Wyoming, water projects in Montana, salmon culverts in Oregon, casinos in Washington, windmill farms in North Dakota, and buildings in Alaska are in the planning stage and they are also in Indian Country. These six states are now the target markets for a proposed pilot training program that will put tribal members through a two week training program making them eligible for jobs at entry-level journeyman positions.

"We have a partnership with the Laborers' Union that I know will help put tribal members into union construction careers. This will improve their quality of life significantly" commented Navarro. "We often say that Indian Reservations have the most partially trained people in the country. What the Laborers are offering us is solid career paths that pay very well and have good benefits for their families."

Using the Tribal Labor Agreement signed last year between the Fort Peck Tribes and the Laborers' Union as a model,

the effort calls for the partnering of tribal entities, Tribal Employment Rights Offices, and the Laborers to secure the use of freshly-trained tribal members by union signatory contractors.

"We intend to utilize Indian Preference ordinances, tribal labor agreements, project labor agreements, the union's training capabilities along with union contractors as the catalyst to make this happen" said Hensley while speaking before government officials. "We need money to train able-bodied tribal members who sincerely want to make a career in the construction industry, and that's why we're here today. We have need for workers and our tribal partners have a need for good paying jobs."

Emphasizing that America's construction workforce ranks are thinning due to the increase in baby-boomer generation retirement, affecting all American industries, the new partners presented construction data prepared by LECET showing projected construction growth areas.



From Left: Conrad Edwards, Vice President of Special Projects for CTER; John Barkley, Umitilla Tribes General Council Chairman; Ed Hensley, Laborers' LECET Representative; John Navarro, President, CTER; and Dan Press, CTER General Counsel

"The six target states' tribal communities are experiencing tribal unemployment rates that are unacceptable. There are opportunities here that we just can't pass up" noted Conrad Edwards, CTER's Vice President of Special Projects "There is so much work out there that our tribal members could be doing and the Laborers are helping us get ready to put them to work."

# LABORERS TRIBAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

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## Tribal Members To Get Union Career Opportunities

### Tribal Rights Attorney Dan Press Assists Lobbying Effort for Tribal Training

Known for his resolute ability to secure self-determination rights for the American Indian population, attorney Dan Press is adding his expertise, and his law firm's support, to the proposed Laborers' and CTER pilot program to train tribal members in six states.

"Funding for the program will help this move forward and produce great opportunities for those who want to work in the good paying construction jobs that are on and near Indian reservations" said Press.

Press, the founding attorney for the Council for Tribal Employment Rights observed that many tribal members had difficulty getting into union construction jobs in the past for many reasons. He now feels that the approach used by the Fort Peck Tribes and the Laborers' Union comes close to being one of the best ideas for a solution to tribal unemployment that he's seen in his thirty-plus years as an Indian rights attorney.

Emphasizing that he knew he was looking at an initiative that would work he said he saw Ed Hensley, from the Laborers, play his video "A perfect Partnership" before the CTER conference and it made him put down his ever-present blackberry and take notice. "I've seen a lot of videos at conferences but this was the first time, in a long time, that I wanted to check out the source and see if it was worth pursuing" Press commented to Pat Smutz, Hensley's colleague from the Laborers' NW LECET program. "I asked Ed to explain a few more things to me and then I knew this was an excellent idea whose time had come."

Press and his law firm, Van Ness Feldman, P.C., are working closely with the new partnership participants to help them secure funding needed for the pilot training program.

### Fort Peck Agreement Will Work Anywhere

By Kevin Buckles, Fort Peck TERO Director

The news of the Fort Peck Tribes agreement with the Laborers Union being used as an example of putting tribal members to work in good paying jobs is another confirmation that our tribes, Assiniboine and Sioux are on the right track with Indian construction projects. As the Fort Peck TERO Director, I know that construction is not for everyone. But with that being said, I just have to comment that for too long, many tribal members have had to take low-paying (and often demeaning) jobs that did not make the proverbial "ends meet" for their families. This was the norm, while at the same time construction projects on the reservation went to people from outside the reservation and even sometimes to foreign nationals.

Part of my job is to secure meaningful jobs with a future and life-supporting benefits. When the Laborers Union landed on our doorstep with a proposal to do what I consider my job's mission, I knew I had a winner.

Working with the Laborers was easy, and rewarding as well. Other tribal groups will be able to benefit from the same career opportunities our tribal members now have the ability to enjoy. I am confident that our agreement will work anywhere a tribe has work on or near their reservation. It is a model agreement and I'm glad it is being considered around the country and Canada as an avenue to put our people into careers.