

Partnership Update

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Blackfeet Tribe Trains Tribal Members to Repair and Renovate Housing

By Ed Hensley, Construction Market Rep., LECET

BROWNING, MONTANA- Through the efforts of the Council for Tribal Employment Rights (CTER) and the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) the Blackfeet Nation in Browning, Montana is getting 11 tribal members trained in construction skills. The program, the Native Construction Careers Initiative (NCCI), is geared towards repairing, remodeling and the emergency repair of housing and is financed in part by a cooperative inter-agency agreement with the Department of the Interior's Indian Energy Economic Development office.

"The specific training is right on target for the helping the reservation with its dire need to repair the tribal housing department's inventory of homes in need of repair. It's a problem that needs different kinds of work to make the homes habitable for tribal members needing housing assistance" said Kevin Buckles, Field Coordinator for CTER. "We have a program that takes people looking for jobs, trains them and gives them the experience they need to find careers that provide good wages and a level of personal satisfaction of knowing they're helping their tribe."

Responding to the housing situation has many tribes scrambling to find people within their reservations and tribal communities who can do the repairs. The extra bonus that the NCCI program brings to the table is the 300 hours of training and hands on experience the tribal members are receiving in Browning.

"A good way to go for this tribe was to bring in the union expertise through LIUNA's partnership arm, LECET. This is part of the in-kind contribution that LIUNA committed to the effort" continued Buckles. "They zeroed in on the situation and

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**Kevin Buckles
CTER Field Coordinator**



From left: Frank Racine, student; Dan Kowalski, Instructor; Kevin Buckles, CTER Field Coordinator; Ed Hensley, LECET

right away we started to see things happen."

The program's participants are working on a house that was boarded up and not being used by the tribal housing program. They are under the careful guidance of a construction training expert who has 30 years experience remodeling and bringing life back to old or vacant residences. Three 100 hour phases of the training program will bring the trainees through the curriculum in Basic, Intermediate and Advanced training certifications.

"CTER's efforts help insure that in the long run, we will see our program graduates secure careers in the industry" said Conrad Edwards, the Vice President of Special Projects for CTER. "The tribe is pitching in and adding to the endeavor with equipment, materials and a lot of assistance. On top of that they will be doing their own entrepreneurial training and assistance in order to give them a chance to become native owned contractors for such types of work."