

Partnership Update

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Spirit Lake Tribe Finishes First NCCI Training Module, Class Doubles

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SPIRIT LAKE, NORTH DAKOTA— Though construction projects usually button up when winter hits, the Spirit Lake Tribe has a couple of indoor projects that are going ahead full throttle. A number of interior remodel projects are being used to train 24 tribal members in a range of aspects of remodel, rehabilitation and renovation on various buildings on the reservation. The Native Construction Careers Initiative (NCCI) is partnering with the Tribe on a Public Law 102-477 sponsored program. The NCCI program that the Department of the Interior, the Council for Tribal Employment Rights (CTER) and the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) are delivering to the reservation is the second in an initial series of 3 demonstration projects targeting unemployment on Indian reservations.

The first program, successfully completed on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, put the NCCI program on the map and it appears as though the Spirit Lake endeavor is going to be at least as successful and maybe even a little bit more. The NCCI program, has now doubled in participant capacity and has already finished its first 100 hours of the Basic module with all 24 trainees gaining a certificate of completion that outlines the number of instruction hours in each type of hands-on and classroom training.

“It’s amazing how fast the trainees are learning and applying their new construction knowledge” said Kevin Buckles, Field Coordinator for NCCI. “The Housing Department just hired 3 of our trainees immediately following their completion of the Basic 100 hour module and they are now gainfully employed. This program really works, and it actually comes down to the simple fact that we have the cooperation of all the tribal entities working together synergistically for the common goal.”

The program has multiple partners and the tribe’s TERO office, JOBS program, Housing Department and the Tribal Council have participated and made things happen to put the program on a smooth heading. After a short foray into hanging sheetrock along with taping and mudding on a couple of tribal houses, the program moved into a commercial setting and started an extensive remodel on the old Housing Department’s office building which will now become the new home for the Employment and Training offices.



Spirit Lake Tribe’s Native Construction Careers Initiative class graduates. All participants passed the the first module of 100 hours of classroom and hands-on training in Remodeling and Renovation

“Mainstream construction practices and methods are being taught by our instructor, Dan Kowalski” commented Ed Hensley, LIUNA’s Construction Market Representative. “We are actually showing the Housing Department some new things that they are now implementing and making new standards for the department.. The program is a win-win for everyone involved, especially the trainees.”

“I broke the class up into five teams after I found 5 people to lead each group” said NCCI’s instructor. “Each one is helping set the pace for their individual team and we are getting an amazing amount of work done. Everyone is taking ownership in the project and we develop the final curriculum to meet the needs of the community.”

Stipends are being provided to the participants as well as a number of small hand tools. The program is geared towards putting people to work quickly while giving them an assortment of skills that will make them employable in the construction industry doing a number of things including, flooring, cabinet installation, sheetrock installation, texturing, painting, trim work, demolition, deconstructing for recycling, and workplace safety.