

Partnership Update

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Spirit Lake Tribe Honors Graduates of 300 Hour NCCI Training Program

By Pat Smutz, Communications Director, NW LECET

The Native Construction Careers Initiative racked up another successful 300 hours of training in remodel, rehabilitation and renovation for tribal members needing a career pathway out of poverty and unemployment.

“As the Tribal Council Chair I put my stamp of approval on this program”

**Myra Pearson
Spirit Lake
Dakotah Nation
Tribal Council Chair**

This time tribal members for Spirit Lake Dakotah Nation, in Fort Totten, ND, were the proud recipients of the latest on-site training program delivered to them through the cooperative efforts of the Council for Tribal Employment Rights (CTER) and the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA). The NCCI program, funded by an interagency agreement between CTER and Department Of Interior's, Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, is gaining momentum in Indian Country as a program that delivers on its promise to provide tribal members with enough skills to enter a construction career in residential, and light commercial areas.

The praise and accolades at Spirit Lake demonstrated not only the success but the pride of the participants who completed the training and the hands-on learning they experienced while remodeling the former

Housing Department Office into the new 102-477 Employment and Training office and Training Center. This saves the tribe approximately three thousand dollars a month in training room rental costs.

Honor songs were sung by tribal elders at the beginning of the graduation bringing to the gathering a spiritual feeling along with a sense of pride and honor for the graduates and their loved ones. It was

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Spirit Lake Tribal Council Chairwoman, Myra Pearson addresses students and attendees at NCCI Graduation Ceremony



Students and their families listen to the remarks of Tribal Leaders and Officials at Graduation Ceremony

Spirit Lake Tribe to Utilize NCCI Entrepreneurial Module

New 200 Hour Course Offers Enhanced Career Opportunities

Not wanting to let go of a good thing, the Spirit Lake Tribe has negotiated with NCCI for another 200 hours of training for their people. The course will be geared more towards a commercial environment with more emphasis put on the entrepreneurship training.

Again, the course will be funded by the NCCI inter-agency agreement funds provided by the Public Law 102-477 program. The tribe hopes to take advantage of the extra training modules offered by NCCI and actually put together an ongoing program of their own that they can use to fight the near-overwhelming unemployment problem facing their tribal members who need the extra confidence and hands-on experience to earn a living on and off the reservation.

The program will be about the development of sub-contracting opportunity wherein the students will learn the methods and practices of being a contractor for remodeling and renovation work. The practical

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PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

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Training Success: Spirit Lake Tribe Officials Praise Program

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fitting because the one most essential thing that made the program such a success was the synergy exhibited by the entities who came together in a spirit of cooperation. As testified to by many of the speakers, The Spirit Lake Tribal Council, TERO, Employment & Training, Planning, Housing, and the Chandeska Chikana Community College (aka Little Hoop) pulled together as a team and made the NCCI one of the finest programs to benefit their Indian nation.

In her remarks before the crowded auditorium of guests and trainees, the Tribal Council Chairwoman, Myra Pearson, told the graduating class that she would do everything in her power to guarantee that the NCCI graduates find meaningful employment. "As the Tribal Council Chair I put my stamp of approval on this program" said Pearson during her time at the podium.

"If it wasn't for the training I received through this program I would still be wondering how I was going to be able to take care of my family" said a graduate after the graduation ceremony. "Now I know what I'm going to do, and I have the skills I need to make sure I don't find myself in that situation again."

In a letter to graduates, Conrad Edwards the Co-Founder of NCCI and CEO of CTER praised the graduates, and in his congratulations noted that those who completed the course "... are the source of pride for all of us and we have confidence and trust that you will take full advantage of this opportunity to build an even better tomorrow." He further wrote "I would also like to commend your leadership, dedication and performance for completing the program under some very adverse conditions and extreme weather (-40 degrees)."

"It wasn't just the training; it was how our instructor Dan (Kowalski) talked to us and gave us confidence in ourselves. He helped me get over the fear of going out and selling my new skills to contractors and

other employers" commented one participant soon after receiving her completion certificates.

"Our program keeps on evolving as we move it to another reservation. Everything is unique with each tribe and we adapt, but it wouldn't happen without the wonderful assistance and teamwork we get from all the affected agencies" said Kevin Buckles, the NCCI Field Coordinator. "We learn something new each time and we apply it at the next site. As an Assiniboine, whose tribe has seen the ravages of unemployment on my own reservation, I know the value of what we are doing and I thank the creator for letting me be part of this."

Putting icing on the proverbial cake, the reservation's community college awarded Continuing Education Units (CEU) to all of the program's graduates. The program is in review to be an accredited program through the Chandeska Chikana Community College and from here on all trainees who successfully finish the program on any reservation will receive CEU's from that institution if other reservations' community colleges do not participate.

Ed Hensley, the Construction Market Rep from LIUNA and Co-Founder of the NCCI program admitted that the initiative has gone beyond its initial expectations. "I honestly have to say that I did not expect to have a 92% to 100% participant success in this" Hensley commented during the graduation. "I knew it was going to be a quality experience for the tribes and their members, but the enthusiasm that I see every time we setup in a new location just validates the program. We have a partnership in Indian Country that I haven't seen before. We are getting an amazing number of requests from tribes who wish for us to do a site visit and evaluate them for the program. It's all because of the great success we've had, people are finding out we have a real winner here."

Enhanced Opportunities:

Tribal leadership wants to build on recent NCCI success

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project being used in this module will task the students with estimating materials, man hours, and other costs that will be associated with the project building. One proposal is to convert the old Employment and Training office into a much needed day care center.

"We are happy that we were able to do this in the winter while work is slow and be able to gear up our students for the next phase of their career training" said Chairwoman Myra Pearson. "We know we are on the right path and we intend to keep following it for the benefit of our tribal members."



Spirit Lake Tribal members congratulate trainees at NCCI Graduation Ceremony

