



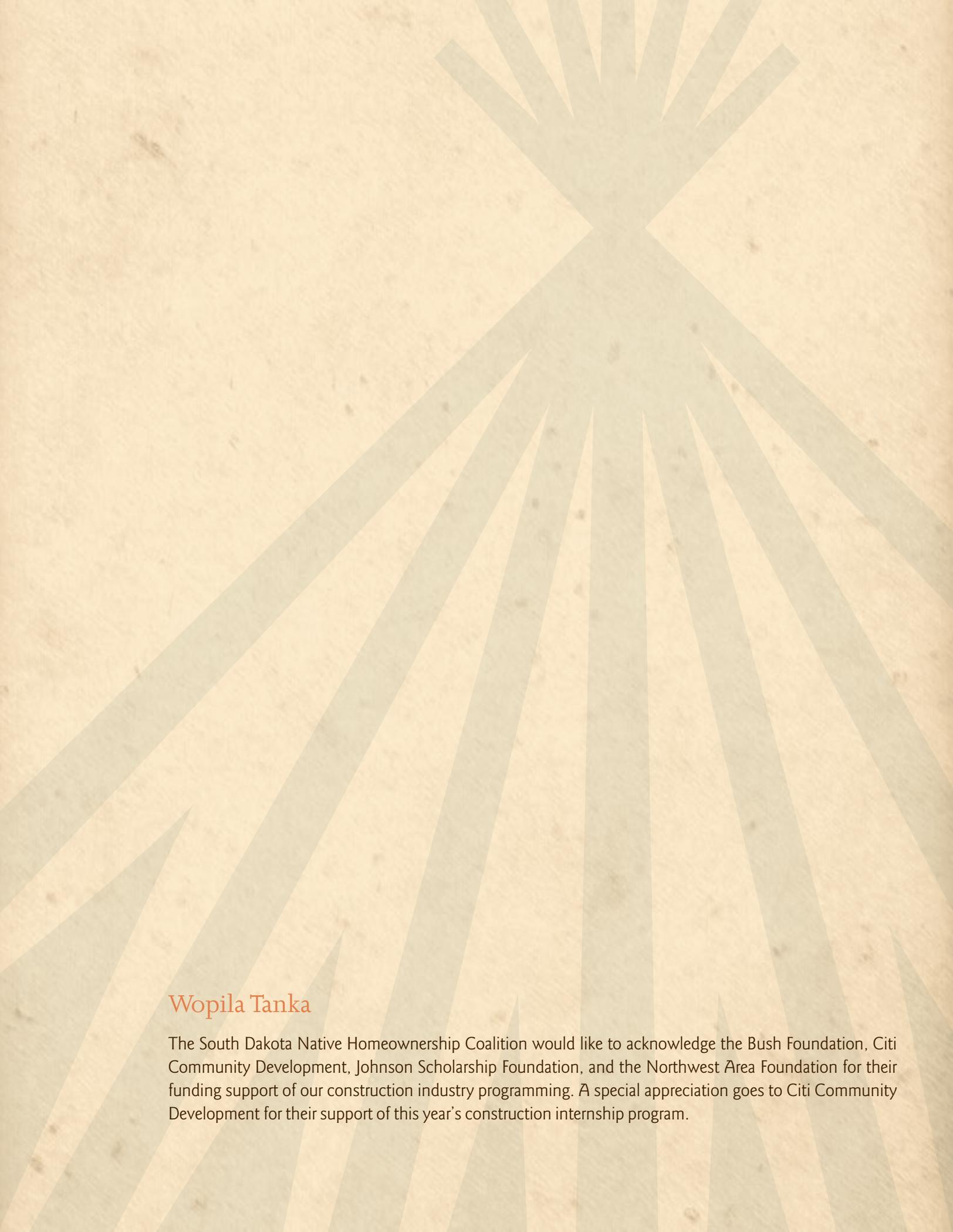
SOUTH DAKOTA  
Native Homeownership  
Coalition

# CONSTRUCTION INTERNSHIP

Program Report  
Summer 2018



*This report is a follow-up to the comprehensive report prepared for the 2017 construction internship pilot program.  
Please see the 2017 report for additional details.*



## Wopila Tanka

The South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition would like to acknowledge the Bush Foundation, Citi Community Development, Johnson Scholarship Foundation, and the Northwest Area Foundation for their funding support of our construction industry programming. A special appreciation goes to Citi Community Development for their support of this year's construction internship program.



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# SOLIDIFYING THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Summer 2018

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**A**fter piloting our Construction Internship Program in summer 2017 on the Cheyenne River and Pine Ridge Reservations, the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition worked with partner organizations in these tribal communities to solidify and strengthen the program in summer 2018.

The Coalition launched the program in 2017 after hearing from contractors how the lack of an employment-ready workforce – qualified employees that they can rely on – hinders their efforts to develop residential housing stock. One of the initial goals of the program was to match building trades students at Oglala Lakota College with contractors who would be willing to take on summer interns. This way, the students could gain hands-on construction experience, while contractors could “test” potential employees in a risk-free arrangement.



## Program Summary

The Coalition partnered with two Coalition member organizations: Four Bands Community Fund and Lakota Funds, Native community development financial institutions (CDFIs) working to support entrepreneurs in their communities. Lakota Funds managed the program on Pine Ridge, while Four Bands managed the program on Cheyenne River. In addition to hands-on construction experience, interns also participated in a series of financial education classes taught by the Native CDFIs, and were required to open a bank account with a local financial institution (if they did not yet have an account). Interns worked for 40 hours each week, for 10 weeks over the summer. They received a stipend of \$10/hour as short-term contractors, for a total of \$4,000. Please see our Summer 2017 report for additional details on the first year of the program.

Program evaluations by interns, contractors, and participating organizations were overwhelmingly positive, and partner organizations reported that the internship is one of the most impactful programs that they have developed. In addition to providing hands-on experience for students, the internship provides the chance for interns to put their financial education into practice in managing their stipends, access employment in communities with some of the highest unemployment rates in the country, and build the capacity of the reservation-based construction industry.



## Year 2: Strengthening the Program

Based on the success of the program in its first year, the Coalition worked with partner organizations to offer the internship again in the summer of 2018 on Cheyenne River and Pine Ridge. During our second year, the Coalition worked with more contractors and interns, and a significantly higher percentage of interns completed the program. In 2017, 23 students started the program, with 11 students completing (48%). In 2018, 33 students began the program, with 26 students completing (78%).

Efforts in 2018 focused on solidifying the program and looking at how to strengthen recruitment efforts, increase retention, and address transportation and other

I feel a lot better about myself. It feels good making my own money and depending on myself.

*-- Intern, Cheyenne River Reservation*

barriers. In working with second cohort of interns, the Coalition has been able to identify key ingredients of success, pinpoint elements of the program to strengthen, and outline areas for future exploration



## MIKE PATTON

### Expanding Horizons and Pursuing New Dreams

Mike Patton (Oglala Sioux) didn't enroll in Oglala Lakota College's General Construction program for the typical reasons. He actually wanted to learn how to build his own house. But after being in the program for a year and completing an internship, Mike's been inspired to think beyond his original intentions.

With a keen eye for opportunity, Mike saw the Coalition's construction internship program as a way to earn additional credits and graduate quicker. He completed his internship with Mendoza Construction, a seasoned contractor based out of Kyle, South Dakota, on the Pine Ridge Reservation. During his internship he remodeled homes in the Eagle Nest Housing Development in Wanblee, South Dakota.

The Eagle Nest homes were originally built as low-income rental units, but are now being converted to privately-owned homes. As families purchase the homes, they typically make upgrades, and that's where Mendoza Construction comes in. Most of the jobs Mike helped with involved installing new roofs and new siding.

“I always knew there was a great need for housing on the Reservation, but I didn't realize how bad it was until I started this. How much we need skilled labor is what was really brought to my attention,” says Mike.

Even with an hour-plus commute from Pine Ridge, Mike was dedicated to his internship and appreciated the opportunity to be connected with an employer on the Reservation. He attributes his good work ethic and reliable job performance to previously having his own business. Mendoza Construction hired him on full-time after the internship was complete, and Mike continued with them until his classes started back up.

Mike says getting into construction and completing the internship changed his perspective a lot. Specifically, it made him more goal-focused.

“It made me think about new things I hadn't thought about before,” says Mike.

Although Mike is scheduled to graduate from the General Construction program at Oglala Lakota College this Spring, he is looking into furthering his education and continuing on to an architecture program. With a background in design from his previous business and his experience with construction, he thinks it would be the perfect way to apply his skills.

## JARED SLATER

### Setting an Example for Future Generations

To complete his internship, Jared Slater worked 400 hours for the Cheyenne River Housing Authority and participated in the build out of Badger Park, a 150-unit housing development that had been on hold for several years due to a water moratorium. But with new water infrastructure in place now, Jared is part of the crew that will be creating homeownership opportunities for Cheyenne River families.

During the internship, which was his first exposure to the construction industry, Jared learned how to build concrete foundations for homes and operate heavy equipment. Upon completing his internship, he was hired on full-time to continue working for the Cheyenne River Housing Authority on the Badger Park project.

Jared's love for learning is a big part of his positive attitude that was no doubt a factor in getting hired on after the internship. He explains that he went into the experience with an open mind to learn about construction. If there was a challenge on the job site, he took it in stride and accepted that it was just part of the job. He stresses the fact that he is still learning on the job every day. Most importantly, Jared learned that given the right opportunity anyone can excel.

“I really appreciated the chance to try,” says Jared.

In addition to working full-time, Jared is continuing his education in the Oglala Lakota College General Construction program. This makes for a “very full-time schedule.”

He says what drives him is “knowing in the end I’ll have the knowledge I need to work jobs with better pay and be able to provide for my family.”

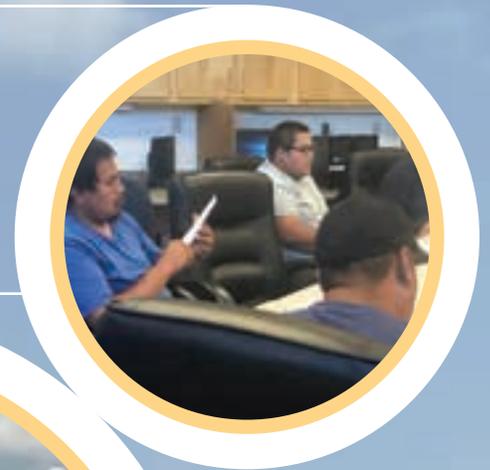
Providing for his family is one of his major goals. Teaching his four children the value of hard work is another. His 8-year-old daughter talks about wanting to do “tough work,” the term she has coined for the hard physical labor so common in the construction industry. His son talks about getting work boots like his dad.

“I’m passing down the example that you can achieve it if you work hard and follow through,” says Jared.



# PROGRAM OUTCOMES

In 2018, the internship continued to result in the numerous key outcomes seen in 2017, described to the right.





Students gained hands-on construction experience on actual construction projects in the community.



Contractors developed relationships with future employees.



Students are more confident about their prospects of finding employment on the reservation after graduation.



Contractors have already hired a number of interns, and are growing their businesses.



Local CDFIs (Lakota Funds and Four Bands) have strengthened their relationships with local contracting businesses (current and potential clients).



Interns have strengthened their financial skills and have increased their access to financial products.



Contractors expanded their capacity to meet the increased demand for housing stock.

# KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

33

STARTED PROGRAM

26

COMPLETED PROGRAM

15

RECEIVED EMPLOYMENT OFFERS

5

SECURED FULL-TIME JOBS

78%

of participants successfully completed the construction internship program.

SECONDARY EDUCATION GRADUATION RATES



25

interns graduated or were projected to graduate from college.

➤ COMPLETION RATE

➤ HIGHER EDUCATION

CREATION OF TOOLS TO SECURE EMPLOYMENT



17

interns developed resumes with assistance from participating organizations.

GREATER POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE EMPLOYMENT



26

interns gained work experience and improved employability skills.

EMPLOYABILITY AT INCOME-GENERATING JOBS



15

interns received offers for full-time employment from their contractors, and 6 interns accepted the offers.

INCREASED FINANCIAL CAPABILITY



26

interns gained financial knowledge and skills.

APPLICATION OF FINANCIAL CONCEPTS



21

interns used financial products to help improve their financial stability.

EXPOSURE TO PERSONAL FINANCE CONCEPTS



11

average number hours of financial education each intern completed.

INCREASED CONTRACTOR CAPACITY



50

hours of technical assistance delivered to build the capacity of contractors.

GREATER POTENTIAL TO MEET HOUSING DEMAND



11

PARTICIPATING CONTRACTORS

Cheyenne River Housing Authority

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Beautification Project

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Property & Supply

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Land & Natural Resources

Dale Lesmeister Enterprises

Oglala Lakota College  
Cheyenne River Campus

Oglala Sioux Lakota Housing  
Mendoza Construction

Sod's Mechanical

Medicine Root Contracting

WoLakota Construction

➤ EMPLOYMENT

➤ PERSONAL FINANCE

➤ CONTRACTOR CAPACITY

# TESTIMONIALS

The internship experience impacted several aspects of the interns' lives – from confidence level to employability. They also gained skills that they will carry with them through other life experiences.



## WHAT THEY SAID...

What was the most important thing you learned through the internship?

“

I learned that having a job is tough! Some days you really don't want to go but you make yourself. I disciplined myself and it was my first job ever and I guess it humbled me and showed me a good work ethic.

“

I learned how to budget and save. I opened an account at Lakota Federal Credit Union.

What is different about the way you THINK/ FEEL about yourself?

“

I feel a lot better about myself. It feels good making my own money and depending on myself.

“

I have more confidence within myself. I feel I am capable of a lot.

“

I feel way better about myself because I had the opportunity to support my family.

“

I feel good because I'm going to graduate, and I've learned more through this already - how to put stuff together myself. I've already been asked to build a deck.

“

I feel proud of myself because I accomplished something.

“

I gained a lot of respect for people in the workforce, and it also helped me by transitioning into an adult and showing me how it is in the real world.

What is different about the way you ACT?

“

I am honestly more serious in a work space than I was before.

“

I learned how to time manage so I could be ready for the next day of work.

“

I get up in the morning feeling happy because I am doing something positive.



# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

**A**fter working with two cohorts of interns and piloting the program for two consecutive years, the Coalition and program partners have identified the following lessons learned:

➤ **Staff support is critical to intern completion and success**

It is important to have staff dedicated to providing on-going support for interns, and able to trouble-shoot different issues as they arise.

➤ **Transportation continues to be a significant barrier**

Unreliable transportation is a real barrier to participant success, especially since reservation-based programming often means traveling 40 – 60 miles from home to the work site.

➤ **Capacity building for contractors remains a critical need**

While the internship focuses significant attention on interns, capacity building for contractors is also vital. The Coalition has seen the direct relationship between the stability of contractor operations and the support they are able to provide for interns. Administrative and financial management support (such as setting up QuickBooks and financial management systems) would result in stronger Coalition partners and stronger contractor operations.

➤ **The Coalition should broaden program eligibility guidelines**

Initially, the internship program was designed as an opportunity for Oglala Lakota College students. Program partners have recognized that additional students may be interested in and could benefit from the internship, including students who attend college off-reservation and come home for the summer. In addition, as the internship expands to other tribal communities, it will be important to expand eligibility guidelines to other students beyond Oglala Lakota College.



Building on these lessons learned, the Coalition is poised to expand the construction internship and bring it to additional tribal communities in South Dakota. Looking to 2019, the Coalition is committed to the following:

➤ **Continue to offer the internship on the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Reservations**

The Coalition has developed a strong track record on Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River, with partner organizations who are committed to continuing to manage the construction internship in their communities, contractors who have pledged to take on interns each summer, interns who gained valuable experience, and tribal members who have accessed full-time employment through the program.

➤ **Explore partnerships to expand the internship to other tribal communities**

Based on the success of the internship on Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River, the Coalition is confident that other tribal communities could partner on and benefit from the program. To date, organizations on Rosebud, Standing Rock, Yankton, and Sisseton have expressed in offering the internship in their communities.

➤ **Explore strategies to effectively support contractors**

Moving forward, the Coalition will explore how to most effectively support contractors, including the possibility of an administrative/financial management internship for business and financial management students as well as on-going training.

➤ **Increase access to public workforce development funding**

For the past two years, the Coalition has accessed private support for the construction internship program. In order to promote the long term sustainability of the program, the Coalition is exploring how it can leverage these private sources of support, and access Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding through the SD Department of Labor and Regulation to support the internship.





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