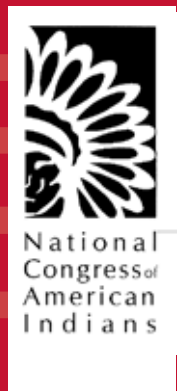


Investing in Tribal Governments

CASE STUDIES FROM THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS • MARCH 2010





NAVAJO NATION



School Construction Returns Jobs to Hard Hit Navajo Reservation

The historic Rough Rock Community School renovations on the Navajo Reservation are changing the lives of students both inside and outside the classroom. Recovery Act funds for these renovations will allow the school to build greater capacity to educate its students using Navajo traditions, and at the same time, create 250 jobs, which means that parents and caregivers do not have to leave home to find work.

FUNDING SOURCE:	Department of Interior
LOCATION:	Chinle, Arizona
INCLUDED IN RENOVATIONS:	2 residence halls, new K-8 school, & renovated high school
JOB CREATION IN CONSTRUCTION:	250
RESERVATION UNEMPLOYMENT:	40 percent
MATERIALS SOURCED LOCALLY:	80 percent

“What does it mean for a child when his father does not have to go hundreds of miles away to find work?” asks Montey Roessel, Superintendent of Rough Rock Community School.

On a reservation where 40 percent of the citizens are unemployed, community members have to look long and hard for work. This search generally means leaving the Navajo Nation, and often travelling as far as Nevada or California. The impact of this dislocation is that children grow up without their parents and caregivers, and marriages often dissolve under the strain.

The recession has only deepened the long-standing Navajo job crisis. In the words of tribal President Joe Shirley, his people have just become “more poor.”

However, Recovery Act funding directed to the Navajo government has created a real source of relief for the community, particularly in the form of construction funds for Rough Rock Community School. Through this grant, it is estimated that 250 jobs will be created in the heart of the Navajo Nation. Approximately 50 jobs were created immediately in the first phases of construction, and 200 more are estimated to be created in the second phase of the project.

Pupils will benefit from more than a renovated school. The domestic job creation is priceless. According to Superintendent Roessel, “There is a huge impact on both test scores and attendance rates when parents stay at home.”

Jobs will not only be created at Rough Rock. The multiplier effect of the construction project will spread across the vast Navajo Nation. Eighty percent of building materials will be purchased locally from Navajo companies, creating a source of demand for struggling Native businesses and saving jobs in industries throughout the reservation. Heavier metals that cannot be sourced locally will come from places like Albuquerque and Phoenix, providing a needed stimulus for the struggling southwest iron and steel industry.

Nowhere are the ripple effects of the project felt more than at the historic Rough Rock Trading Post. Open since 1897, the arrival of construction workers is expected to generate \$250,000 for the general store.

Shop assistant Eva Curly describes how the local staff is working to cope with all the new business. “We are the ones who have to make sure that the construction workers are well fed. They all come over for lunch and dinner, and we make them a picnic table. We make them burgers every day, and twice a week we serve stew. It is exciting having all these people.”

Curly and her colleagues have yet to experience the descent of the second wave of construction workers on their trading post. Owner of the Rough Rock Trading Post, Bonnie Jackson, explains that “locals have started making food to sell to the construction workers, trying to compete for the new business as well.”

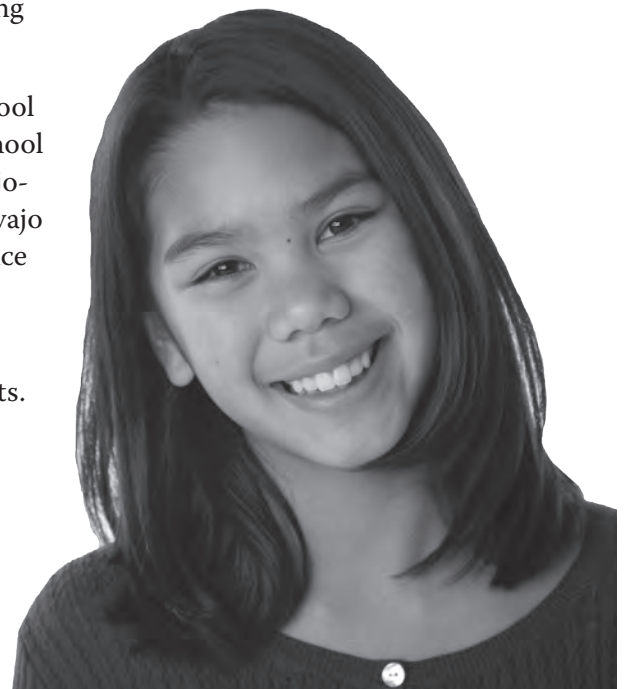
The women at the Rough Rock Trading Post also point to the local town of Chinle, where hotels are doing business housing some of the workers.

It is fitting for construction at Rough Rock Community School to make such a difference to the Navajo reservation. The school was created in an experiment in the 1960s, as the first Navajo-controlled school. The school was designed to teach the Navajo language and reinforce cultural identity to students, who once attended a school system dominated by western culture.

It has since grown to offer over 400 students an education that teaches Navajo culture side-by-side mainstream subjects. The Recovery Act project will allow this education to serve more students and give the school the facilities it needs to teach its young tribal members.

“There is a huge impact on both test scores and attendance rates when parents stay at home.”

— MONTEY ROESSEL, SUPERINTENDENT,
ROUGH ROCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL





CHOCTAW NATION

Choctaw Care for Elders Creates 240 Jobs in Six Communities

The expansion of elder communities on Choctaw lands in Oklahoma will allow the Tribe to keep elders and young adults where they want and need to be — in the heart of their communities — while creating a significant boost to the local economy.

FUNDING SOURCE:	Department of Housing and Urban Development
LOCATION:	Durant, Oklahoma
INDEPENDENT LIVING HOMES PROJECTED:	72 in six communities
JOB CREATION IN CONSTRUCTION:	240
RESERVATION UNEMPLOYMENT:	13 percent
AVERAGE PER CAPITA INCOME:	\$6,203

Twelve years ago, the Choctaw Nation began purchasing tracts of land to create residential communities for elders. These purchases were part of a promise Gregory E. Pyle made when he was first elected Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He was determined to keep elders at the center of tribal community life. Recovery Act funding means that at least 72 new independent living houses would be added to these communities, more than doubling the size of the communities.

The project is perfectly placed not only to deliver on the objectives of the Recovery Act by creating an immediate economic stimulus, but it also promises to impact the quality of life for the Choctaw people. Approximately 240 jobs in construction and infrastructure development will provide a much-needed source of employment and put money in workers' pockets. This has the effect of directly impacting the local economy when those same workers eat in local restaurants, stay in local hotels, and use local shops.

The community implications of job creation tends to get lost in the statistics when the focus is on the number of jobs created. However, as Russell Sossamon, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation, explains, “The repercussions for the community are vital, since many young Choctaw who have had to leave the community for work can now come home again to work. These jobs mean that our young people can stay in the community, stay with their families, stay in church, play sports, and take part in civic activities.”

The first 70 jobs were created on November 2, 2009, and the project reached full employment by January 4, 2010, thus fulfilling the Recovery Act requirement of providing an immediate stimulus.

For elders, the grants will have an effect similar to that of the young adults: they can stay in their community. Currently, with limited facilities at home, elders are living alone, far away from their families, friends, and community with limited daily interaction with other people. Sossamon points to the impact of loneliness on their mental state. They are also at greater risk of being the victims of abuse when away from their families.

The Choctaw region of Oklahoma is tornado country, which poses a real threat to those in poor health, especially those living in outdated housing.

The elder communities allow seniors to live their golden years in the close company of other tribal elders while maintaining the freedom of independent living. After Recovery Act construction is completed, each site will have a community center where elders can come together for fellowship, meals, or just to play cards. There is also an above-ground storm shelter so elders have protection during tornado season.

Elders will be in a position to easily access health care, including receiving regular checkups. The houses in the new communities will also have emergency lighting. Elders can set off a light on the exterior of their property to get attention in the case of an emergency.

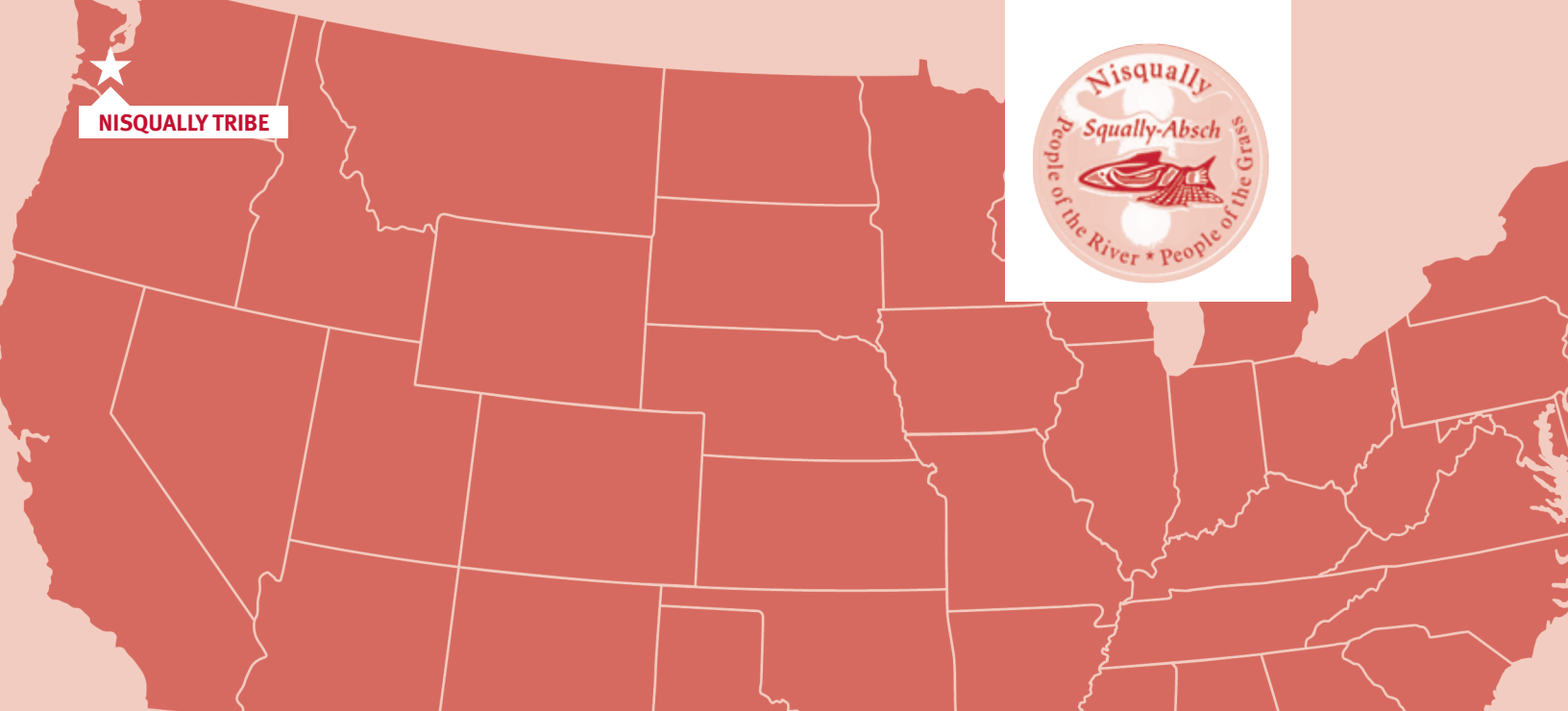
Tribal members do not just see their relationship with elders as a duty to care for them. Native American cultures honor elders as the preservers of tribal knowledge and custom. The elder community centers allow Choctaw youth to regularly interact with and learn from their tribal elders.

In the long term, the elder communities have a multiplier effect on the entire region for non-Indians and Indians alike. The Choctaw work with local towns and cities when extending water, electricity, and sewage systems, bringing infrastructure to non-tribal communities close to the elder sites. Private contractors have also started building near the elder communities, extending further investment to the region.



“Native Americans respect their elders; this is a core part of our culture.”

— RUSSELL SOSSAMON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF CHOCTAW HOUSING AUTHORITY



Nisqually Diving Industry Benefits Puget Sound Economy and Environment

The Nisqually tribal diving team was awarded contracts, with other entities receiving Recovery Act funds, to clear nets out of the Puget Sound. The Nisqually diving enterprise is helping to grow the Puget Sound economy, save the environment and help preserve a cultural way of life using modern technologies.

FUNDING SOURCE:	Puget Sound Consortium
LOCATION:	Olympia, Washington
TOTAL CONTRACT FOR SOUND CLEANUP:	\$4.6 million
2008 REVENUE FROM CLAM DIVING:	\$2.3 million
TOTAL DIVERS TRAINED SINCE 1995:	Over 700
TRIBES TRAINED BY NISQUALLY TRIBE:	13
RESERVATION SIZE:	4,800 acres

The Nisqually Indian Tribe, a salmon fishing tribe, has seen its waters polluted by non-biodegradable nets since the 1970's, and its salmon harvest numbers fall dramatically. Forced to diversify away from fishing, the Nisqually Tribe began training teams of Native scuba divers. Nisqually Aquatic Technologies (NAT) was created in 1995 to train Native divers so that the Nisqually could harvest geoduck clams deep below the water's surface. Almost fifteen years later, over 700 tribal divers from 13 different tribes across the Puget Sound region have been trained.

“We have a small land base, and we need to diversify. Diving is opening up our economy to the larger community.”

— JOE CUSHMAN, DIRECTOR OF NISQUALLY PLANNING DIVISION

By allowing access to depths of water previously untouched, the Nisqually have turned what was traditionally a subsistence harvest of clams into a commercial enterprise. In 2008, divers from the Nisqually Tribe harvested 286,000 pounds of clams, creating about \$2.3 million in revenue. Many of these clams are exported to Japan, where geoduck clams are considered a delicacy.

NAT training programs have ensured that these economic opportunities have been realized across the Sound, with divers from the small neighboring Squaxin Island and Puyallup Tribes bringing in around 350,000 pounds of clams last year.

Shellfish harvesting is seasonal, however, and Recovery Act funds have allowed NAT to secure contracts such as the Puget Sound cleanup. Divers from other tribes are working side by side with their former Nisqually instructors on the Puget Sound project. In addition to Recovery Act contracts, NAT has also been contracted for a wide range of activities, from repairing leaking reservoirs to fixing telecommunication cables on the Pacific sea floor. Cleaning local municipal water tanks is an increasingly large source of revenue. Technical training courses create teams of tribal divers capable of gaining the most challenging contracts. This brings a much-needed revenue source to the Nisqually Tribe, who is keen to diversify away from dependence on its Red Wind Casino.

The Recovery Act contracts have put the Nisqually Indian Tribe on the cusp of a new era of diving. Publicity from the Recovery Act contract has helped the Nisqually divers in their drive to expand their activities. Joe Cushman, Director of the Nisqually Tribe’s Planning Division, explains how press coverage from the Puget Sound clean up has generated interest from potential clients across the country, including from the United States Navy. Tribal divers are slowly growing their reputation within the industry.

The growth of the Nisqually diving industry is at the center of an effort to diversify their economy. The Tribal Council hopes to have revenue from other sources surpass income from the casino within five years. “Diving is heavily interrelated with growth elsewhere in the Nisqually economy,” explains Cushman. The Puget Sound project exemplifies this relationship, as tribal divers cleaning up non-biodegradable nets allow traditional Nisqually salmon fishing to prosper again. Further, it is hoped that once the tribally-run diving company starts generating more revenue, funds can be reinvested into other tribal projects.



“Shellfish are seasonal. The Recovery Act has helped us to pursue other diving projects.”

— JOE CUSHMAN, DIRECTOR OF NISQUALLY PLANNING DIVISION



Rosebud Sioux Pioneers New Model for Indian Prisons

The Recovery Act will finance the construction of a new model of tribal prison on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. The jail is being designed to cultivate a sense of culture and identity among inmates as a way of changing a penal system that often contributes to further alienating prisoners from the community and to the hardening of criminals.

FUNDING SOURCE:	Department of Justice
LOCATION:	Rosebud Sioux Reservation, South Dakota
JOB CREATION IN CONSTRUCTION:	65
LONG-TERM JOB CREATION:	100
RESERVATION UNEMPLOYMENT:	85 percent
ESTIMATED RESERVATION RE-OFFENDER RATE:	80 percent
NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN INCARCERATION RATE:	44 percent higher than the U.S. average

“Prison turns our tribal members into hardened criminals; they come out much worse than when they went in,” says Rosebud Corrections Facility Administrator Miskoo Petite, Sr. The current Rosebud jail is typical of the penal system across Indian Country, where underfunding and outdated facilities leave inmates with the lack of basic amenities, sanitation, and safety. These poor conditions, likened to developing countries, inevitably mean crime is rampant within the prison walls, serving to educate even the most petty of criminals to the ways of hard crime. Beyond the deteriorating infrastructure and safety concerns, the Rosebud prison has reached its capacity of 65 inmates, and thus the tribal court faces the dilemma of either overcrowding the prison or accepting its limited ability to punish crime.

“This is a model for tribal justice that could be used across Indian Country.”

— ROBERT MOORE, COUNCILMAN,
ROSEBUD SIOUX TRIBE

The Rosebud correctional facility funded by the Recovery Act will provide 65 immediate jobs during the construction phase and is projected to create an impressive 100 long-term jobs in an economy with an 85 percent unemployment rate. The new facility will hold 200 inmates and implement a dramatically new type of incarceration. The prison will rehabilitate its inmates through exploring their sense of Lakota identity during the course of their imprisonment. Darleen Black Spotted Horse, Resource Manager for the

Rosebud, explains how in tight-knit reservation communities, a criminal “must first lose any sense of his community before he inflicts crime upon it.” The prison will aim to restore this sense of community.

For those inmates on a path to rehabilitation, the correctional facility will have onsite Lakota spiritual instruction and a functioning *inipi* sweat lodge; prisoners will participate in traditional ceremonies. The prison is designed to facilitate communal engagement, with a layout of unbarred cells surrounding a large common space. Ken Haukaas, Economic Development Advisor for the reservation, says that the plan is designed to show that “we are all part of the same Lakota community.”

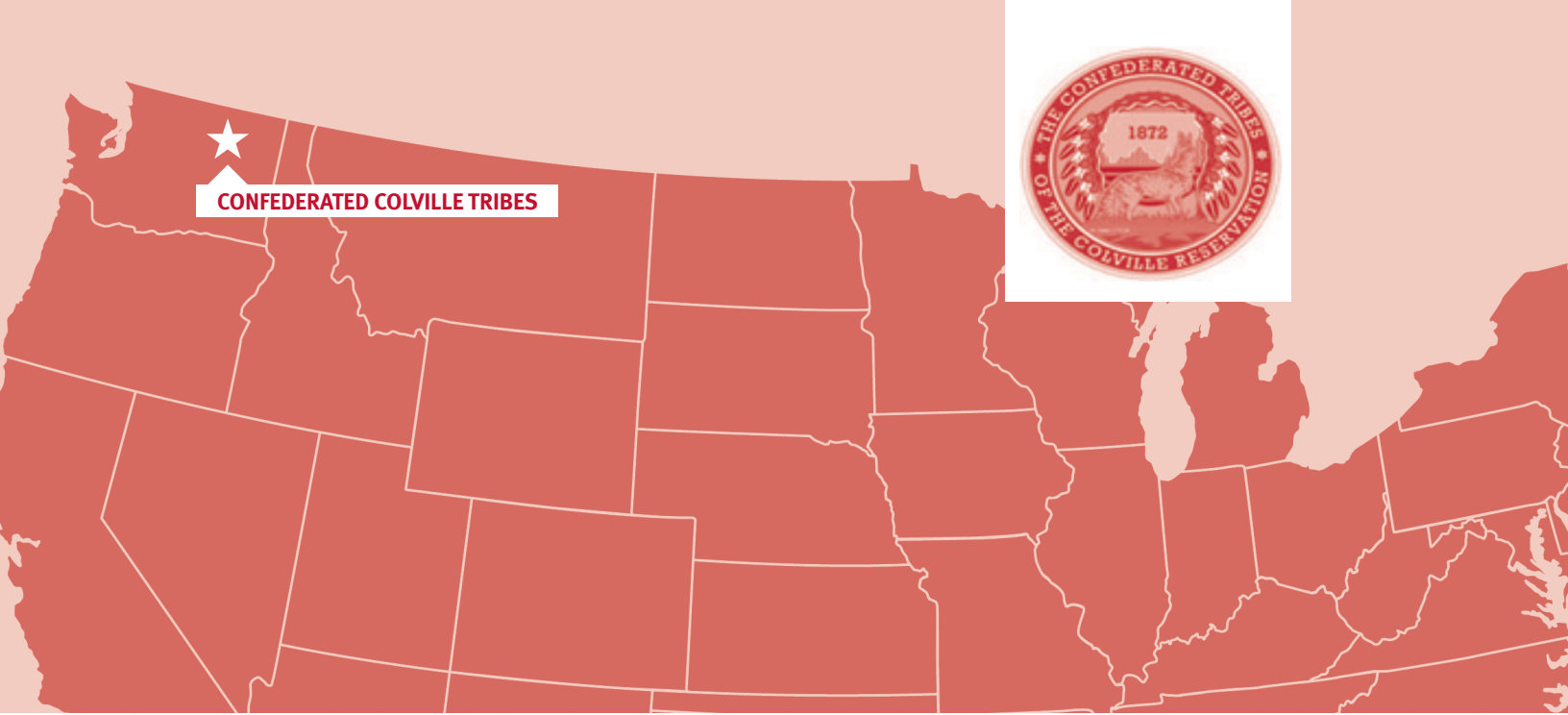
The prison will also deal with the critical issue of inmates returning to a reservation with limited economic opportunities and a high unemployment rate. The correctional facility will partner with the local tribal college so university professors can offer courses for inmates. There will also be collaboration with elders, members of the community, and faith-based organizations to provide prisoners an education and training in useful skills, like information technology and accounting. By providing opportunities for ongoing involvement between prisoner and community throughout the duration of imprisonment, both parties are ready for the inmate to fully reengage as a contributing tribal member at the conclusion of their sentence.

Most importantly, argues Haukaas, the new prison will end a pattern of misguided youth “making one stupid mistake that sees them trapped in a lifetime of crime.” Many tribal youth are exposed to alcohol, drugs, and crime from an early age. When these youth end up in jail, they are affected by the rampant crime and violence — especially when they are sent to federal prisons far away from their families and their culture. Haukaas explains that the new Recovery Act prison will allow the Tribe to keep most offenders on the reservation “where we can support them and better prepare them with working skills to contribute to the tribal community at large.”



“[I]n the tight-knit reservation communities, a criminal must first lose any sense of his community before he inflicts crime upon it.”

— DARLEEN BLACK SPOTTED HORSE, RESOURCE MANAGER



Road Construction is a Path Forward for Timber-Reliant Colville Tribes

FUNDING SOURCE:	Departments of the Interior & Transportation
LOCATION:	Okanogan and Ferry Counties, Washington
RESERVATION SIZE:	1,400,000 acres
JOB CREATION IN CONSTRUCTION:	Up to 300
RESERVATION UNEMPLOYMENT:	50 percent
JOBS LOST TO TIMBER MARKET DOWNTURN:	400
AVERAGE PER CAPITA INCOME:	\$7,561

The heavily-forested Colville Indian Reservation had become increasingly reliant on its timber industry. The national housing crisis has devastated the timber-reliant economy, causing it to collapse in line with the housing industry.

“The recession has meant that our net revenue from lumber and specialty wood products is below the cost of production. It is now costing us money to stay in the timber business,” says Daniel L. Brudevold, the Confederated Colville Tribes’ Director of Land and Property Management. This has forced the Tribes to shut down lumber production, resulting in the loss of 400 jobs. This does not include the loss of related lumberjack jobs.

Funding from the Recovery Act promises to address both the short and long-term economic needs of the Colville Tribes. The Recovery Act will fund an overhaul of the transportation infrastructure on the Colville Reservation, repairing 70 percent of the roads. The formation

“We are a timber-based reservation, and as the housing market collapsed, so did our economy.”

— DANIEL L. BRUDEVOLD, DIRECTOR OF LAND AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

of vital infrastructure on this rural reservation will provide immediate jobs for the unemployed and lay the foundation for future economic development and diversification.

The transportation funding will immediately create 200 to 300 jobs, countering the many of the losses in the timber industry. After the recently unemployed are trained in road construction, they will gain a new skill set, qualifying them for construction jobs. Brudevold believes this is essential, as “declining timber demand even before the recession means

that these jobs will probably never come back to prior levels, meaning some [former employees] will need to find new areas of work.”

The infrastructure project has also provided an opportunity to grow a new reservation-based business. Twelve Bands, a tribally-owned construction company, was formed in September 2009 in partnership with Seattle-based Graham Group Inc. The joint venture was created to allow the Tribes to compete for large construction contracts and provide subcontracting opportunities for smaller tribal member-owned construction businesses. The Recovery Act will not only provide the developing enterprise with its first large contract, but in the process, will create the infrastructure necessary to make the fledgling tribal construction industry viable.

The large, mountainous reservation is served by roads that are mostly unpaved, with many not updated for over thirty years. The restricted access has severely inhibited the Tribes’ economic diversification. The immobility of both people and goods has meant that house prices are constantly depressed, business is discouraged from entering, and transporting exports is difficult and costly. Automobile fatalities are a constant reality of travelling on roads that lack side barriers and wind around steep mountains.

“There are industries that will do business here and use our resources when we have an adequate road network. Building supplies, exports, mail, deliveries, vendors, not to mention workers, all need roads,” explains Brian Clark, Director of Roads on the Colville Reservation. In addition to opening up the reservation to new business, the roads will also create improved access to new logging sites, and with timber increasingly being transported by truck, production costs will fall as it becomes easier to move goods to market.



“Transportation is the prerequisite for any level of economic growth in rural communities.”

— BRIAN CLARK, DIRECTOR OF ROADS, CONFEDERATED COLVILLE TRIBES



GILA RIVER TRIBE INDIAN COMMUNITY



Gila River Employment Training Program is Saved

Reduced government revenue during the recession has forced tribes to make cuts to needed programs. The Youth Training Program — a program that provides internships and crucial support for youth who have few opportunities to gain the skills needed to enter the workforce — is a telling example. Funding from the Recovery Act saved the program for the Gila River Indian Community.

FUNDING SOURCE:	Department of Labor
LOCATION:	Sacaton, Arizona
PROJECT FUNDED:	Youth internships and skill development
WORKFORCE TRAINING CREATED:	60

Tribal governments confront the challenge of meeting the needs of their citizens. With limited revenue from taxation, economic development becomes a necessary source of revenue for important programs and services. As the nation's economy contracted, revenue needed to support these vital programs also contracted. Their reliance on economic development often makes tribal governments more vulnerable in economic downturns. This represents a real challenge for communities that have grown dramatically through economic development and for those wrestling with some of the lowest income levels in the country.

The Gila River Tribal Council, like many other governments, was faced with growing budget deficits and dwindling federal support. Successful programs with substantial community impact were on the chopping block. In April 2009, the Employment and Training Department of the Gila River Indian Community discovered that their tribal youth training program would have its budget slashed by more than half.

“We were getting really worried. The programs that we run are crucial to fighting tribal unemployment and giving young tribal members the chance they need,” said Teresa Masayesva, the Youth Training Coordinator. She continued, “When we heard about Recovery Act funds, we realized that this could be our chance to get the funding we needed to help our community.”

The Tribe’s Employment and Training Department had previously supported 40 participants in its youth training program, which was slated for reductions. With Recovery Act funding under the Department of Labor’s Youth Employment Program, the endangered youth training program was expanded to 100 participants. Many of the Gila River youth that participate in the program come from low-income families and face additional obstacles, such as coming from broken homes, having served time in jail, having dropped out of high school, and/or teen pregnancy.

Masayesva describes the enthusiasm generated throughout the Tribe when the Gila River Indian Community discovered that the Recovery Act would allow the youth training program to not only survive, but to significantly expand: “We received a massive response rate of young tribal members wanting to participate in a program that could turn their lives around.”

The Youth Training Program provides tribal members with paid summer work placements in a field related to their interests. Concurrently, they receive ongoing mentoring from the Employment and Training Department, which supports them during their internship and holds sessions providing them with career development skills. Program alumni lead camping trips, sharing their expertise with the young tribal members entering the workforce.

The Recovery Act allowed the Employment and Training Department to offer internships to 15 college students as well. The program’s ultimate goal is to find full employment for its participants, and a considerable number of Recovery Act-funded participants may now gain jobs at the place where they interned. A single mother of 19, who had dropped out of high school, joined the internship program last summer. After discussing her goals with the team, she was placed in the Office of Water Rights Program, pursuing her interest in protecting her Tribe’s water supply. The young participant’s employers were so impressed with her that she has been offered a job working part-time for them while she goes back to finish school.

Alia Maisonet, the Gila River Public Information Officer, describes the effect that the internship program has had in her office. “My graphic designer started as an intern here. This summer he has been a supervisor, training a new graphic design intern whose position was paid for by the Recovery Act. The new intern is very good; he has a real creative streak and a thirst to learn. We always ask: Are there positions available [now]? Then we make sure that tribal members are ready for these employment opportunities.”



“I tell my intern to add everything he creates to his graphic design portfolio. He is going to need it, now he has entered the industry.”

— ALIA MAISONET, GILA RIVER PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER



Rosebud Sioux Vision for Tribal Airport Finally Takes Off

The Recovery Act will finance the construction of an airport on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. The project will realize the tribal council's vision of delivering life-saving emergency health care and is a key component of economic development for the remote reservation, which is struggling to create opportunities.

FUNDING SOURCE:	Department of Transportation
LOCATION:	Rosebud Sioux Reservation, South Dakota
JOB CREATION IN CONSTRUCTION:	75
LONG-TERM JOB CREATION:	100
RESERVATION UNEMPLOYMENT:	85 percent
NEAREST FULL SERVICE HOSPITAL:	2.5 hours by ground transportation
ANNUAL EMERGENCY TRANSPORTS:	517

Eleven years ago the Rosebud Sioux tribal council outlined its vision for a tribal airport that would serve the needs of the remote reservation. The Rosebud airport was ideally positioned to fulfill Recovery Act criteria because it had been rigorously planned for more than a decade. Through the Recovery Act, construction has already begun with about 75 jobs created in an area that has unemployment levels as high as 85 percent and is home to two of the poorest counties in the nation.

The long-term implications of finally connecting the Rosebud Sioux Reservation with the infrastructure needed to meet a number of health and economic needs are significant. On

a remote reservation far from the interstate and previously equipped with a lone helipad, the new airport is a source of optimism for the 20,000 reservation citizens. The reservation, in its relative isolation, has roads that are nearly inaccessible at night and in poor weather conditions, making access to health care, external markets, and supplies a challenge. Tribal President Rodney M. Bordeaux explains his long-term economic vision, “[The airport] can foster economic development in the areas of tourism, hunting and fishing, and other tribal economic development projects.”

While creating jobs and economic opportunity for the future is important, the airport will serve immediate health concerns of today. At least 517 flights transport seriously ill or accident and emergency patients to medical facilities off the reservation every year. In these critical cases where lives and limbs are saved in the first hour after trauma, patients must first be driven 19 miles to the nearby airport or, in the case of bad weather, 50 miles to the larger airport at Valentine.

Darleen Black Spotted Horse, Resource Manager for the Rosebud, explains, “The reservation hospital is understaffed and does not have equipment to perform life and death procedures. If there is a car crash or there is a complication during childbirth ... [our residents] have to be airlifted off reservation.”

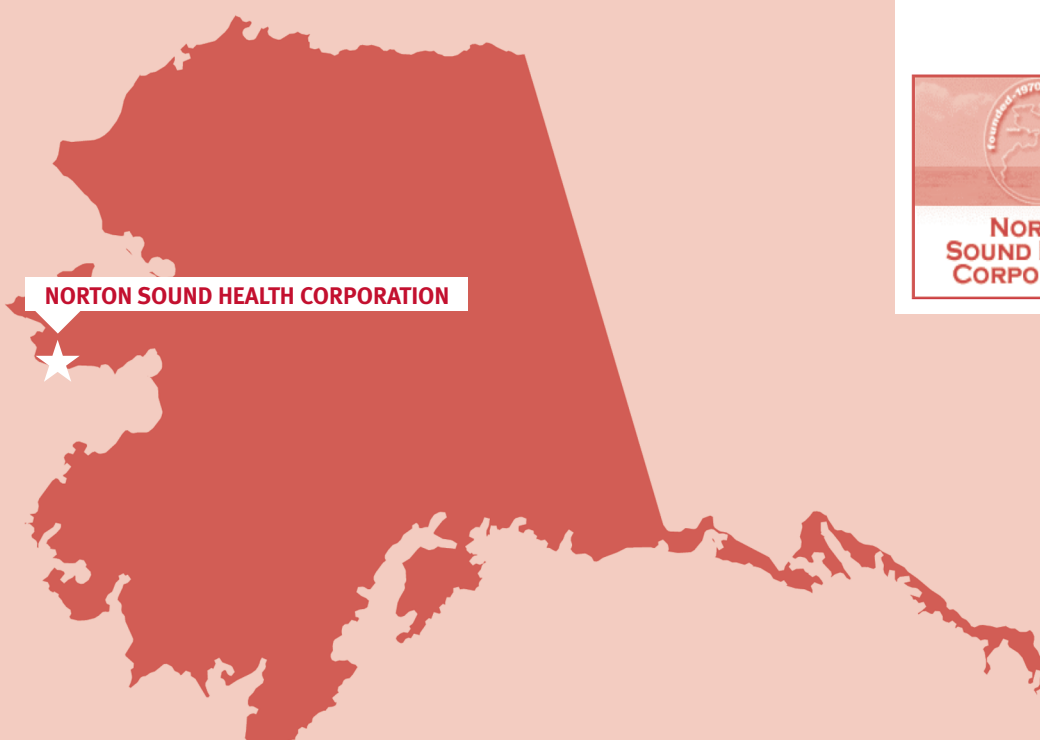
The new airport is being built directly next to the reservation hospital, which means tribal members will no longer have to worry about making the long journey to the airport before they can be on their way to receiving the critical emergency care they need. Tribal members will finally gain easy access to larger hospitals where there are trauma centers, burn treatment centers, and emergency service bays.

The Rosebud Sioux community has plenty of military service veterans with airfield management expertise and previous experience with the Federal Aviation Administration, an agency which is providing training to younger tribal members. The airport will be fully tribally-run. It will include a 4,800 foot long landing strip, a hanger to hold the local fleet of planes, and a central facility that can act as a terminal.



“[The airport] is a significant step forward not only for the tribe, but for communities across Indian Country.”

— TIM JOHNSON, U.S. SENATOR (D-SD)



Delivering Health Care on the Edge of the Arctic Circle

Construction of a new hospital in the community of Nome, Alaska will be funded through the Recovery Act. The medical staff in Nome serve approximately 11,000 people scattered between 15 Native villages in one of the more remote areas of the country on the tip of the Bering Strait.

FUNDING SOURCE:	Department of Health and Human Services
LOCATION:	Nome, Alaska
FACILITY:	Norton Sound Regional Hospital
JOB CREATION IN CONSTRUCTION:	25
PROJECTED EMPLOYEES AT HOSPITAL:	525
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN NOME:	11 percent
SUICIDE RATE IN THE BERING STRAIT REGION:	600 percent above national average

The new Nome hospital will be at the center of a health care network that stretches across the frozen landscape to reach even the most remote of the fifteen villages in the Norton Sound region. Until now this vast stretch of the Bering Strait has been served by a hospital that had not been updated since the 1940's, with a small renovation done in the 1970's.

The construction of the hospital will bring huge economic stimulus to the town of Nome. Beyond the immediate construction jobs, 75 permanent positions will be created for new support staff: in laundry, maintenance, and the cafeteria. The hospital, currently with a staff of 450, is already a big employer in a town of 3,500 people. The Recovery Act funds ensure that all these jobs are protected.

The hospital was recently contacted by a small mining town in Montana, where 65 jobs are going to be saved because of the contract to provide steel for the new hospital. Carol Piscoya, C.E.O. of Norton Sound Health Corporation, says, “This is exactly what the stimulus plan was designed to do: an Alaska Native hospital in the Bering Strait will have a multiplier effect in small town Montana.”

Nome cannot be reached by road. Villages, as small as 150 people, have their own clinics that are in constant contact with the main Nome hospital through video conferencing. Doctors in Nome can watch patient consultations in the village clinics and talk to clinic staff, step by step, through various medical procedures. Sometimes villagers simply have their consultation directly with a Nome doctor via video conference.

The Norton Sound Health Corporation is fighting back against the alcoholism, suicide, and substance abuse that have tormented their communities for generations. Suicide is devastating villages across the Bering Strait, and the Norton Sound region has the highest suicide rate in Alaska. Carol Piscoya, lamented, “We cannot leave mental illness untreated just because it is hard to reach the villages.”

Nome hospital has trained counselors in eleven of the villages. These counselors are local residents who are well known in their communities. They are in constant video communication with experienced psychologists back in Nome who give them whatever support they need.

The village counselors also help to build a sense of community for youth suffering from depression. The counselors, who are mostly in their twenties, lead cultural excursions by taking young village members camping, fishing, and hunting. “The counselors have become real role models within their villages,” explained Carol Piscoya. While serving their community role with support from the Nome staff, many are also working towards their B.A. degree in sociology.

The training of village-based medical staff is part of a wider program to address Native health problems by getting more Alaska Natives involved in medicine. The Nome hospital works with local colleges to develop nursing projects and has launched an internship program. Four placements will be available for young villagers to come to Nome and work for a year in different parts of the new hospital, in areas such as nursing and accounting.

Thousands of miles from the health care debate in Washington DC, the Nome hospital is creatively meeting the local needs of its remote residents, creating jobs — and careers — and impacting economies in the states.



“This is exactly what the stimulus plan was designed to do: an Alaska Native hospital in the Bering Strait will have a multiplier effect in small town Montana.”

— CAROL PISCOYA, C.E.O., NORTON SOUND HEALTH CORPORATION



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LOWER BRULÉ SIOUX TRIBE, SOUTH DAKOTA

Lower Brulé Begins Building a Cultural Tourism Economy

Endowed with sweeping prairies, abundant wildlife, and a vibrant history, the Lower Brulé Sioux Tribe has begun to reap the benefits of a culture devoted to the wise use of their land and economic resources. Recovery Act funds will help to preserve Lower Brulé's culture and enhance its ongoing educational outreach to the nation and beyond.

FUNDING SOURCE:	Army Corps of Engineers
LOCATION:	Lower Brulé, South Dakota
PROJECT FUNDED:	Historic preservation and cultural education
RESERVATION UNEMPLOYMENT:	45 percent
AVERAGE PER CAPITA INCOME:	\$4,850

On the Lower Brulé Sioux Reservation, the contrast between cultural and economic strength is a harsh reality today. Unemployment reaches 80 percent in some areas of the Lower Brulé reservation, and one in two people is below the poverty line. The Tribe sees its traditional belief in the interrelationship between nature and culture as one of its best economic assets.

The Recovery Act will provide funding for several cultural preservation and educational projects. The funds will support the restoration of five historic prairie churches from the early 1900's; upgrades to the Tribe's Buffalo Interpretive Center, which was constructed in 2003; and the protection of ancient cultural sites under serious threat from erosion. Crucially, tribal participants in these projects will gain jobs enhanced by training in cultural preservation techniques. Members will also learn to translate tribal histories and traditions for outside visitors.

In the early reservation period, the Lower Brulé lived in six small communities of extended families, each with its own prairie church offering Catholic or Episcopalian ministries. These churches were a focal point for communities going through a difficult adaptation to a new way of life. The church restorations will help re-establish the link between families impacted by development and provide a renewed symbol of spiritual and cultural survival.

Some may see irony and a hint of justice in the Recovery Act funding from the Army Corps of Engineers to support these culturally significant projects. In 1963, the Lower Brulé were forced to watch as the Army Corps of Engineers flooded their homes and lands as it dammed the Missouri River. The Tribe lost almost all its prime farmland, making poverty inevitable. The water also flooded the Tribe's cultural sites, including many sacred places, and the continuous shoreline erosion has also exposed ancient cultural sites to looting. Recovery Act funding will help put an end to this desecration.

The Tribe wishes to spread this spirit of renewal beyond the reservation. The Kul Wicasa Oyate, the Tribe's traditional name for its people, have always been a river people interacting with other tribes, and, since the late 18th century, with Europeans and Americans. They long ago learned that the exchange of ideas was the first step towards positive coexistence. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Lower Brulé Sioux Reservation was the first designated stop on the Native American Scenic Byway, a long road built through Indian Country inviting visitors to share in Sioux culture.

The Lower Brulé Cultural Resource Office, which handles all preservation and communication concerns, has developed several educational tours. Emily Ford, a recent tourist visiting from the east coast, wrote that, "[visitors] can harvest corn, make sweet grass braids, and pick currants and plums. They can even spend the night in an authentic, buffalo-hide, brain-tanned tipi." Unwittingly perhaps, these 'tourists' are being invited to understand an ancient culture through participation — a sharing that transforms them into welcome visitors, and the Tribe believes, future advocates for Indian people in their own communities.

Through their cultural programs, the Lower Brulé strive to create the collective recognition of a shared world. The Tribe also benefits from the economic diversification their educational programs provide. In addition to tourism, the Lower Brulé operate one of the largest popcorn producing farms in the country and recently acquired a New York-based investment firm, one of the first 100% Native American-owned financial services companies. The Tribe knows that their cultural values have taken them through generations of hard times and helped them face the future with a quiet confidence. With increased cross-cultural communication, interaction, and understanding, they will fully meet the optimistic goals of the Recovery Act to create jobs and a tourism economy using cultural assets.



“We are laying groundwork to ensure that the spiritual strength of our people will be remembered.”

— MICHAEL B. JANDREAU, CHAIRMAN OF THE
LOWER BRULÉ SIOUX TRIBE

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