



CONSTRUCTION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



2020
Program Report



Mission & Vision

The mission of the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition is to increase homeownership opportunities for South Dakota's Native people to build strong and healthy communities. The Coalition works to achieve its vision of strong, thriving, sustainable communities in South Dakota where Native people have the opportunity to achieve their dream of homeownership.





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“

I think the CIP is good for young youth who are just graduating or in college. This really helps them build that character ... they start to learn that there are other opportunities and you have to sacrifice for those opportunities.

”

– Intern Supervisor

OVERVIEW & INTRODUCTION

SINCE 2017, the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition has partnered with member organizations to provide our Construction Internship Program (CIP). Through the internship, college students and other youth are placed with participating contractors and departments over the summer. After piloting the program for two years with Four Bands Community Fund on the Cheyenne River Reservation and Lakota Funds on the Pine Ridge Reservation, in 2019, we expanded to work with the Sisseton Wahpeton Housing Authority and Sisseton Wahpeton 477 Program on the Lake Traverse Reservation, as well as the Rosebud Economic Development Corporation (REDCO) and the Sicangu Wicoti Awenyakapi (SWA) Corporation on the Rosebud Reservation.

When CIP partners met in February 2020 to develop plans for summer 2020, we had a clear vision. We would continue providing the internship in four tribal communities (Cheyenne River, Pine Ridge, Sisseton Wahpeton, and Rosebud), placing interns with contractors and providing financial education classes. In order to cover the costs of the program, including intern stipends, we would reach out to foundation partners who had previously provided support for our program. We would also continue our efforts to develop a partnership with the South Dakota Department

of Labor and Regulation, starting with a pilot on Pine Ridge. Enrolling qualified Pine Ridge participants in the State's Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) program would enable our program to leverage and diversify our funding, while providing access to the State's workforce development programming for participants.

Just one month later, by mid-March 2020, this clear vision had been replaced by major questions:

- ✘ With health and safety lockdowns and closed borders in our tribal communities, could we continue to provide the internship during a pandemic?
- ✘ If we continue to operate the internship in Summer 2020, should we modify the program terms (target number of hours and participants)?
- ✘ If we could continue to operate the internship in Summer 2020, would it look the same in each community?
- ✘ Would funders who had supported our program in the past continue to provide support in these uncertain times?
- ✘ Could we access alternative funding if our traditional funders were not able to provide support?

In the face of these questions, partners were united in their commitment to the internship. Starting in April, partners agreed to meet on a bi-weekly basis to share updates, make decisions, and report on successes and challenges. Answers to the big questions emerged and evolved:

➤ **With health and safety lockdowns and closed borders in our tribal communities, could we continue to provide the internship during a pandemic?**

Partners agreed that if we could operate safely during the pandemic, the benefits of the internship were needed more than ever. Interns would continue to benefit from hands-on work experience that could lead to long-term employment. Contractors who had participated in the program in the past continued to request interns, viewing them as a valuable addition to their teams, and recognizing the benefits of being able to train interns before potentially hiring them.

➤ **If we could continue to operate the internship in Summer 2020, should we modify the program terms (target number of hours and participants)?**

We soon realized that given the challenges of providing the program during a pandemic, we should scale back our target numbers, going from 20 or more interns at each site to five or ten, and scaling back from 400 hours to 200 hours. Rather than continuing the program with the numbers we had achieved in the past, our goal was to ensure that the program could continue.

➤ **If we continue to operate the internship in Summer 2020, would it look the same in each community?**

We also realized that our commitment to continue the internship would mean that it would look very different on our different sites. Different tribal COVID-19 policies and health and safety guidelines resulted in very different conditions in each community. While some tribal departments and housing authorities continued to operate, others were closed, with employees shifting to remote work. In some communities, construction was permitted, while in others, it was prohibited.

➤ **Would funders who had supported our program in the past continue to provide support in these uncertain times?**

Understandably, the focus of many funders had shifted to immediate needs resulting from the pandemic, which meant that they would not be able to provide support for the internship.

➤ **Could we access alternative funding if our traditional funders were not able to provide support?**

Recognizing that our past funders had shifted their focus and were not able to support the internship this year, we agreed to reach out to potential sources of support in our own communities and developed local partnerships. This strategy proved successful, as we strengthened partnerships with Oglala Sioux (Lakota) Housing Authority, the Sicangu Nation Employment and Training Program, and the Sisseton Wahpeton 477 Program. Four Bands also partnered with their local TERO office for the first time. Although the TERO program was working at a limited capacity due to COVID restrictions, they partnered with Four Bands to provide interns for a school district construction project.

The fact that partners were able to continue providing the internship during a pandemic speaks volumes about our partners, the need for the program, and its value for participants. This report will share how the internship looked at each site in Summer 2020, some of the impacts we achieved, our lessons learned, and where we're headed.



SNAPSHOTS OF PARTICIPATING SITES



“

It's like a good real work site. The boss won't tell you what to do every time. You have to do it yourself.

”

– Intern



Pine Ridge Reservation

Recognizing that most previous funders would not be able to support the internship in Summer 2020, our Pine Ridge partner, Lakota Funds, approached the Oglala Sioux (Lakota) Housing Authority to access potential support for the program. While Lakota Funds had placed two to three interns with Housing Authority departments in previous summers, Lakota Funds saw the opportunity to significantly expand this partnership. If the Housing Authority could provide support for the majority of Pine Ridge interns, Lakota Funds could manage placements and the workforce development programming that the Housing Authority was committed to conducting. Under this win-win partnership, Lakota Funds increased its target numbers, agreeing to place and manage 20 interns for a ten-week period, placing 15 at Housing Authority departments around the reservation, and 5 with private contractors. Once the internship was underway, Lakota Funds was asked to continue placements for an additional ten weeks. This second phase was impacted by COVID-19, when community exposure and quarantine restrictions made it necessary to halt the program.

Beyond funding support, the partnership between Lakota Funds and the Housing Authority has resulted in some significant benefits for the program. Supplementing the required financial education classes taught by Lakota Funds, the Housing Authority committed to providing a “Life Mapping” course for participants. The Housing Authority has also committed to hiring a number of interns, meeting one of the program’s key goals of providing long-term employment for participants. This local partnership, in helping the program move away from dependence on outside funders, is a model that we believe can help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the internship program.

“

When I was little, I'd go ride bike and I'd see him [my dad] working on a house. It made me want to grow up and build houses for people.

”

– Intern



Cheyenne River Reservation

While Four Bands was committed to providing the Construction Internship Program over the summer, efforts were severely impacted by the safety measures and guidance that the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe implemented in response to COVID-19. Tribal programs and agencies, some of Four Bands' key program partners, were closed in March through the summer. Individual contractors were severely limited by the guidelines, and the Cheyenne River Housing Authority (another primary partner) was not able to sponsor interns.

Towards the end of the summer, based on the reputation of Four Bands' internship programming in the community, the organization was asked by a community partner to place three interns. Because of its experience in providing the internship in previous years, Four Bands was well-positioned to quickly put together the necessary pieces (including outreach, application, and orientation) to place these interns and provide a valuable opportunity for interns and the placement site.

Despite the fact that tribal safety measures made placing interns impossible on Cheyenne River for the majority of the summer, Four Bands' consistent participation in Construction Internship program team meetings on a bi-monthly basis over six months, as well as their ability to pivot quickly to place interns when possible is a testament to the organization's belief in the program and its benefits for participating interns, contractors, and community partners.

“

It's good for the younger ones to catch on now, it's good for them to do that [...] they can be a set role model for the community.

”

– **Intern**



Rosebud Reservation

The Construction Internship Program on the Rosebud Reservation evolved and shifted in response to COVID-19 under the leadership of Shere Wright-Plank of Tatanka Funds, successfully placing five interns at five placement sites, and providing valuable experience and training for interns and benefits for placement sites.

Initially, Tatanka Funds planned to work in partnership with the SWA Corporation to place ten interns over a five-week period, five Tatanka Funds interns and five SWA interns with the Sicangu Nation Employment and Training Program (SNETP) pledging to cover stipends for each of the interns. When SWA was unable to participate in the program due to Covid-19 restrictions, Tatanka Funds began working with its five interns, extending the program term from five to ten weeks with stipends from SNETP.

In addition to extending the interns' term, Tatanka Funds also shifted placements in response to COVID-19. Originally, interns were placed with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Forestry Department (RST Forestry), Rosebud Construction Incorporated, and the Sicangu Oyate Land Office (SOLO).

Initially, interns placed with the RST Forestry were going to help build a “do it yourself” cabin, but COVID-19 preparations resulted in a change of plans. Instead, interns with the Forestry Department gained skills by building sheds, picnic tables, rough boxes, and benches. When the Forestry Director was then tasked with COVID-19 response efforts, Tatanka Funds placed the remaining intern with Rosebud Facilities Management. In addition, the intern initially placed with SOLO was placed with the Tatanka Funds Housing Initiative, where she assisted in data collection and community outreach focusing on homeownership and homesites.

Each of the Rosebud interns completed financial literacy training, which was provided by Lakota Funds. Tatanka Funds supplemented these classes with professional development training every Wednesday, which covered the chain of command, reporting to your site supervisor, time sheet completion, safety appropriate work gear, and phone etiquette.

“

I like that it's teaching me to do stuff – like if I wanted to build a shop or something.

”

– Intern



Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate/Lake Traverse Reservation

2020's Construction Internship Program on the Sisseton Wahpeton Lake Traverse Reservation was placed under the supervision of Simon Keeble of the Contracting Specialist Office within the Sisseton Wahpeton Housing Authority. Over Summer 2020, the program successfully recruited, screened and placed five interns with Arrow Construction & Lumber.

Daniel Kirk, Owner of Arrow Construction & Lumber was a participant of the 2019 CIP and provided valuable experience, knowledge and training for the five interns under his watch as a participating contractor. SWHA contracted with Arrow Construction & Lumber to remove existing shingles from 84 rental units that were deemed "critical" and replace with metal roof systems. During the 6-week program, the interns helped replace a total of 20 roofs. These interns have stayed with the company and continue to balance education with work and have since begun construction on a 2-bedroom home.

Sisseton Wahpeton Housing Authority partnered with the Sisseton Wahpeton's Tribal 477 Program (formerly ET/ Demo) to place five interns over a five-six week period and to cover stipends for each of the interns. In addition to intern stipends, the 477 Program also provided financial literacy training for participating interns. These financial literacy classes were geared toward improving the interns' personal finances which involved learning and practicing a variety of skills related to budgeting, managing and paying off debts, and understanding credit and investment products.

Overall, the 2020 Construction Internship Program successfully met Sisseton Wahpeton goals, a significant accomplishment considering the challenges of the COVID pandemic.

“

Yes that's what it is, get him ready for the future – if he wants to stick on with us or if he wants to go on with someone else.

”

– Intern Supervisor



“

I like everything about it right now, I love everything that we are doing, and everything is hands on experience and some of it's still refreshing to me.

”

- Intern

PARTNER REFLECTIONS

AS WE WRAPPED UP Summer 2020 programming, partners had the opportunity to reflect on the program: what worked well, and what to look at changing in the future. Highlights of these reflections include:

➤ **Initial outreach, recruitment, and intake efforts are vital**

Because of the pressures of launching the program during a pandemic, partners noted that compressed timelines meant less time for outreach, recruitment, and screening. These steps help to ensure that we have the right participants in the program, participating for the right reasons, and contributing to stronger retention rates.

➤ **The program is leading to job offers for participants**

One of the original goals of the internship was to create job opportunities for interns, and this is happening. The internship is providing an chance for interns to learn important skills, prove themselves to employers, and secure long-term employment.

➤ **Strong collaboration contributes to the success of the program**

Rather than four stand-alone, separate sites, partners have coalesced into a strong and committed team that supports one another, helps to address challenges, and celebrates partner successes. Despite the fact that their tribal departments were shut down due to COVID-19 and community guidelines prevented any placements for most of the summer, the Four Bands partners continued to join team calls and support the program throughout the summer. This way, Four Bands continued to contribute to team discussions and decisions, benefitting the program with their extensive internship experience.

➤ **Benefits to contractors and contractor relationships should not be underestimated**

In addition to benefits to interns, the program continues to benefit contractors. Contractors are gaining employment-ready employees, who they have trained and mentored. Nearly all of the contractors who have participated in the program return to participate again, taking on additional interns. In building the capacity of contractors, the program is also strengthening our CDFI borrowers, and our relationships with these borrowers.



KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRAM SUCCESS

Partner organizations collected a range of data, which was compiled and analyzed to gauge the success of the Construction Internship Program. Metrics revealed program success across several dimensions.

► PARTICIPATION & COMPLETION



► INTERN SKILL BUILDING & EMPLOYMENT



INTERVIEW WITH DIGGO WHITE FACE

Diggo White Face is a supervisor at Oglala Sioux Lakota Housing, Wounded Knee site, where Austin White Butterfly was placed in Summer 2020.

What types of tasks do you have Austin doing?

“ Mostly like construction, fixing doors and windows, and right now we have him on the renovation project renovating the patch work to move into a unit right away. He’s getting experience there too. We have him out north of a unit here in Manderson. Yesterday they did the painting and removed the old windows and doors.

So you are creating a well-rounded individual, kind of like a handyman right?

“ Yes that’s what it is – get him ready for the future if he wants to stick on with us or if he wants to go on with someone else. If he goes on with someone else at least he’ll know what to do and how to do it right.

Seeing that you oversee Austin from time to time, what do you like about the experience of the CIP?

“ Well it’s kind of good for them, because back in the day when we started we had to start from the ground up. As maintenance workers we had to get our own tools and we didn’t know what was expected coming into any of the units. They were old houses that you have to build from the ground up so it’s good experience for them.

Are there any challenges you are experiencing so far?

“ No, not too much. We are just getting started with him so far. It’s a new thing for us.

Is there anything else you want to share?

“ It’s a good for the younger ones to catch on now. It’s good for them to do that. They can be a set role model for the community at each community where they can go back and tell their friends and give encouragement to those who aren’t doing anything.



ON THE HORIZON

DESPITE THE CHALLENGES in providing the Construction Internship Program in Summer 2020, partners are more committed than ever to continuing to offer the program in the future. Looking to the future, partners have shared the following:

➤ **Continue to access local support**

Local support (from Housing Authorities and 477 programs) was vital to our ability to provide the program this summer. Moving forward, we want to continue to look to these local partnerships for financial support. At the same time, we want to explore other potential philanthropic partnerships with regional and national funders, identifying workforce development funders working with a racial equity lens.

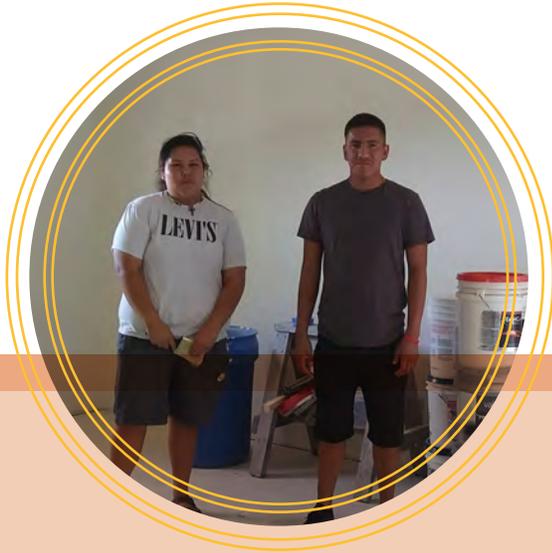
➤ **Explore additional certifications**

In the future, we'd like to look at providing additional certification training for interns, which could include safety inspection, OSHA training, and CPR.

➤ **Consider different educational programming for different participants**

As the program has grown, we have started working with two distinct populations – college students, and older adults who are more independent and are often supporting their own families. We should consider tailoring the financial education programming to the needs and realities of these distinct groups.



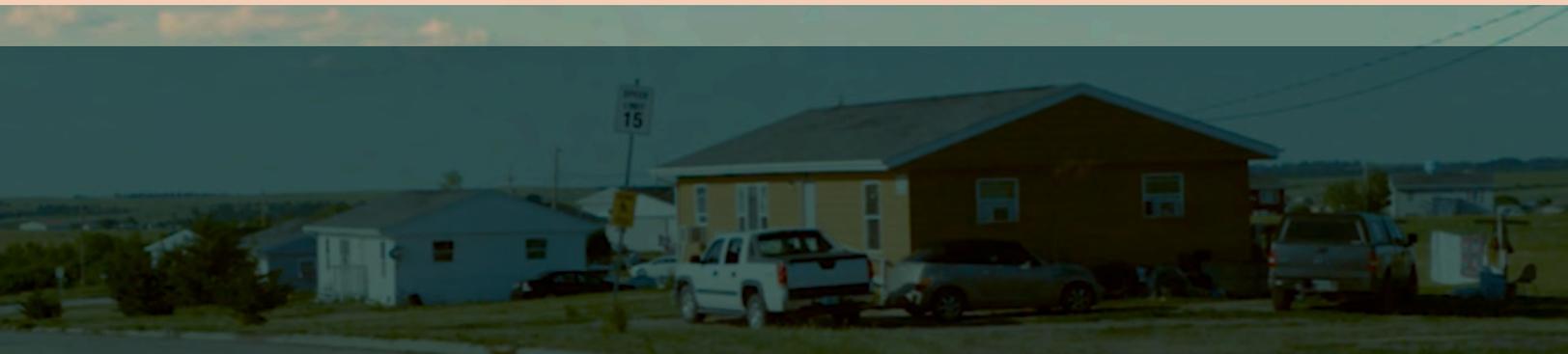


➤ **Continue to supplement financial education programming**

In addition to basic financial education programming, our sites have offered supplemental programming, including life mapping and professional development, (taught by OSLH and Native Connections). Interns benefit tremendously from these classes, and we should look at how we can ensure that they are provided on each site.

➤ **Maintain consistent program guidelines while ensuring flexibility for each site**

Partners agreed that the success of the program lies in consistency and working towards a common vision, while providing the flexibility for each site to design its program to best meet the needs of its community. Along these lines, each site already has goals for 2021: the Lakota Funds would like to strengthen and expand its partnership with the Oglala Sioux (Lakota) Housing Authority on Pine Ridge; the Sisseton Wahpeton Housing Authority would like to partner with additional contractors; Tatanka Funds on Rosebud would like to see interns able to work on the RST Forestry's "do it yourself" home kit build; and Four Bands would like to see local partners expand and strengthen their own roles within the program.





IN MEMORY

The South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition construction internship partners would like to dedicate this report to the memory of two interns that passed away this year, Kenneth Fights the Thunder and Eugene Garcia. Kenneth participated in the internship on Cheyenne River in 2017 and Eugene participated in the internship at Sisseton Wahpeton during the summer of 2019 and 2020. Both young men showed great promise and they will be missed.



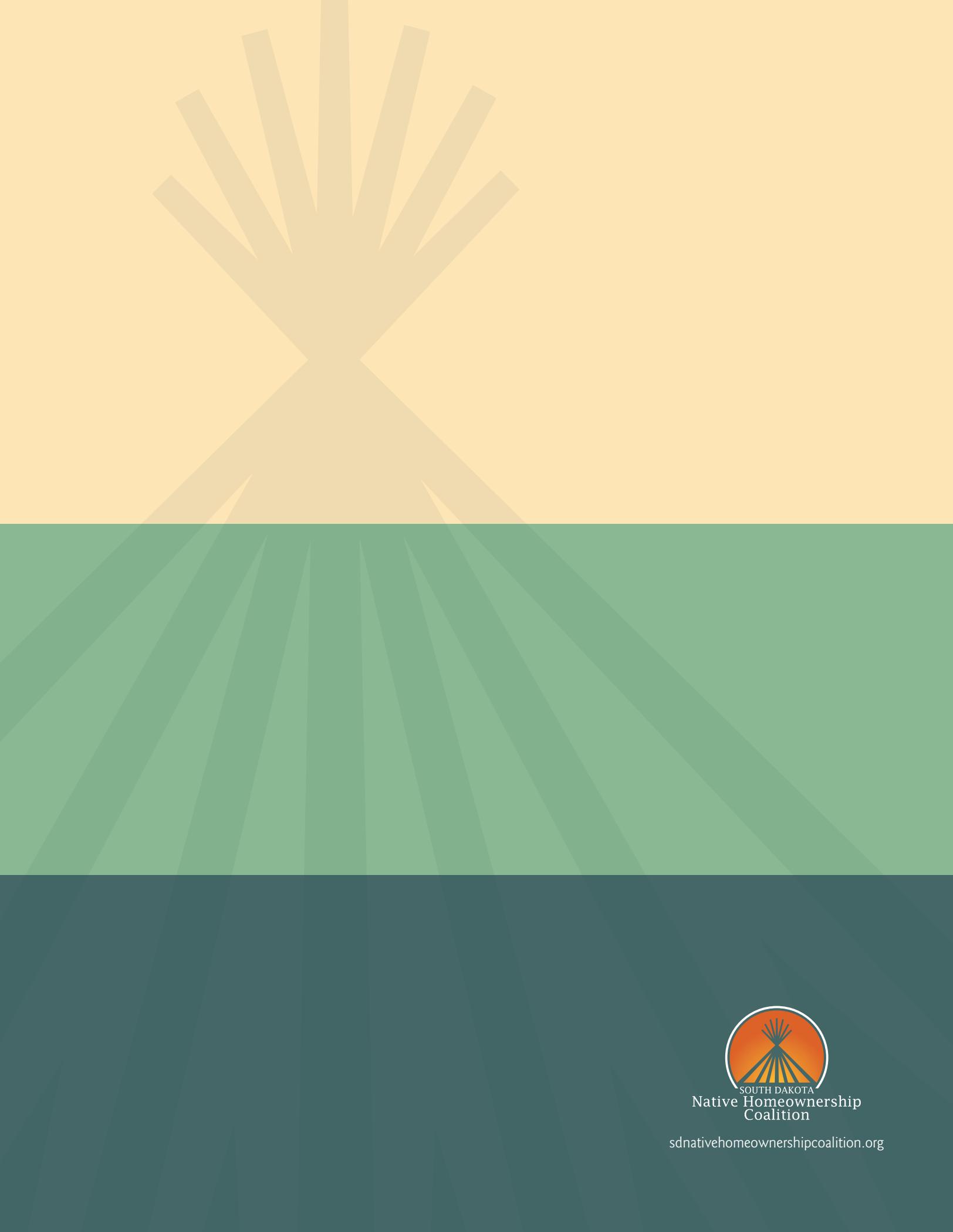
Wopila Tanka

Our Construction Internship Program team would like to thank the following partners for their support for our program. We appreciate these partners' belief in our program, and the impact it has on participating interns, contractors, and organizations, as well as the critical resources that they have provided:

Cheyenne River Housing Authority
Enterprise Community Partners
Johnson Scholarship Foundation
Native Connections
Oglala Sioux Lakota Housing

Sicangu Nation Education and Training Program
Sisseton Wahpeton 477 Program
Sisseton Wahpeton Housing Authority
Sicangu Wicoti Awenyakapi Corporation





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