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Washington State — Rural Housing Service

Tribal College Builds Natural Resource Lab with Green Focus

Outline Of Need:

The Northwest Indian College, located on the Lummi Indian Reservation near Bellingham, Whatcom County, had only one science building which was actually a very old trailer. This trailer was used for all indoor teaching, research and lab activities. Lack of space meant limiting the number of students and curtailing the number of science courses. The NWIC has now been accredited as a four year college. The students attending are from various tribes around the region.

How Rural Development Helped:

USDA Rural Development provided funding to construct a 3,350 square foot facility that will include classrooms, office space, laboratories, interactive exhibit space and storage. The college obtained funding through the Community Facility Tribal College Grant Initiative program. Total project cost was estimated at \$1,543,850 of that \$765,000 came from Capital Campaign funds and the remaining \$778,850 was from USDA Rural Development. Construction was completed in 2010. The Northwest Indian College is using the design of a traditional plank house with green and sustainable structures for the new laboratory.

In 2007 the College began accepting students into its first baccalaureate degree program, a Bachelor of Science in Native Environmental Science. The creation of this degree program was due to studies which showed that scientists capable of working in environmental sciences are in high demand, and Native Americans employed in science occupations lag far behind that of white, non-Hispanic men..



Natural Resources Lab at the Northwest Indian College, built in 2010, uses GREEN construction methods and materials to reduce the building's carbon footprint.

Fast Facts

Program: Community Facilities

Investment: Partners: Capital Campaign

Demographics:

- Lummi Indian Reservation, Whatcom County

Congressional District: WA-02

Impact:

- The building of the Natural Resource Lab at NW Indian College through green construction methods helped to reduce the college's carbon footprint and assisted those students who were interested in earning a Bachelor of Science in Native Environmental Science degree.

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The Results:

NWIC was granted candidacy status for a four year Native Natural Science degree and in 2007 it began accepting students into its first baccalaureate degree program, a Bachelor of Science in Native Environmental Science (BSNES). Prior to implementation of the BSNES degree program, just 34 tribal colleges offered bachelor's degrees. In 2005, 166 students earned bachelor's degrees from seven of those colleges. Of those students only 11 (7%) earned a science-related degree. This project directly addresses the need for well trained Native Scientists. This Natural Resource Lab is awaiting its LEED certification and was built with the following Green features:

- Erosion and sedimentation control practices are sustainable.
- They flush with reclaimed water and use low flow fixtures.
- They installed solar panels.
- Heating is radiant floor, not forced air.
- Natural ventilation, not air conditioning.
- Heat recovery units.
- Rooms have occupancy sensors for the lights.
- All appliances are energy efficient.
- Construction waste was diverted from landfills.
- Their lumber and wood products were sustainably harvested.
- Much of the building materials are local and recycled.
- Lots of daylight and outside views in the labs and offices.
- The paints, sealants and adhesives used are low VOC.

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