



National Institute of
Environmental Health Sciences
Worker Training Program

NIEHS WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM

Building Capacity with American Indians
and Alaska Natives to Handle Hazardous
Materials and Respond to Emergencies



MAY 2023

About the NIEHS Worker Training Program

The NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP) funds nonprofit organizations to provide health and safety training for workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials and waste at work or while assisting with emergency response. The NIEHS WTP was authorized by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (42 USC 9660).

Under these NIEHS Superfund-related activities, WTP grantees provide trainings across the country through the Hazardous Waste, HazMat Disaster, and Environmental Career Worker Training Programs. WTP grantees also provide non-Superfund related training at U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) facilities. These activities are funded by the NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program.

For more information on the NIEHS WTP, visit www.niehs.nih.gov/wtp.

COVER:

LEFT: Roy Stover (left), HazMat trainer from the Alabama Fire College, poses with David Wolf (right), former president of the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS), at a joint event. Partnerships like those between WTP grantees and inter-tribal organizations like NAFWS increase the reach of crucial training about environmental and health hazards. (Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

RIGHT: A St. Regis Mohawk Tribe member in New York State practices putting on hazardous materials (HazMat) protective gear. Alabama Fire College's Worker Safety Training program has developed robust training that builds the tribe's leadership capabilities in regional environmental and disaster response planning. (Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

Building Capacity with American Indians and Alaska Natives to Handle Hazardous Materials and Respond to Emergencies

The NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP) funds health and safety training for American Indian and Alaska Native tribal workers and communities across the U.S. These training efforts protect workers, improve emergency and disaster response, increase employment opportunities, and build capacity in American Indian communities.

During the 2022 program year, NIEHS WTP funded organizations (grantees) trained more than 1,336 American Indians and Alaska Natives, delivering more than 61 courses and nearly 21,967 contact hours. During this period, 30 courses were offered to tribal workers, including:

- Adult CPR
- Asbestos Awareness
- Basic Construction Skills
- Basic First Aid
- Basic Math Skills
- Basic Superfund Site Worker
- Chemical Emergency Response
- Confined Space
- Disaster Site Worker
- Emergency Response Awareness
- Emergency Response Basic Operations
- Emergency Response Incident Command
- Emergency Response Radiological Transportation
- Emergency Response Refresher
- Emergency Response for Specific Hazards
- General Construction Safety
- General Industry Safety
- Hazardous Waste Operations
- HazMat Transportation Awareness
- HazMat Transporter/Basic
- Hazard Communication
- Illicit Drug Response Awareness
- Incident Command System
- Infectious Disease Awareness
- Mass Casualty Incident Awareness
- Oil Spill Response
- Pollution Prevention
- Radiation Worker Refresher
- Reporting Environmental Releases
- Site Worker Refresher

Significance of Training Courses

WTP was established under the [Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act](#) of 1986.

As such, the program was tasked with training and educating workers who may be engaged in activities related to hazardous waste removal, containment, or emergency response. Separate from Superfund-related activities, WTP has a longstanding [partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy \(DOE\) Office of Environmental Management](#) to administer a health and safety training program for workers at DOE facilities.

Given its unique mission, WTP courses ensure that workers receive the knowledge and skills to comply with federal standards and [regulations set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#). This includes standards such as those for [general industry \(1910\)](#), [Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response \(HAZWOPER\) \(1910.120\)](#), [construction \(1926\)](#), and more.

WTP courses are important in helping tribal workers involved in response to, cleanup of, and transport of hazardous materials. Depending on the site and nature of their job, tribal workers may face risk of exposure to chemical, radiological, or biological hazards. It is critical that these workers receive training to effectively protect themselves and their colleagues from harm.

Understanding the Need for Training

Tribal nations across the U.S. are self-governing entities, operating their own solid and hazardous waste programs, utility systems, and law enforcement agencies. However, many tribal communities are located in rural and remote areas with underdeveloped infrastructure and high rates of poverty, thereby lacking access and the means to provide adequate training in environmental or occupational health and safety compared to other parts of the country.

Additionally, many tribal communities face unique hazards due to local contaminated sites. For example, many Superfund sites needing remediation are located on or near tribal lands. Also, tribal communities contend with contamination and hazardous conditions from oil and natural gas exploration, as well as illegal methamphetamine laboratory sites.

The COVID-19 pandemic also presented challenges for tribal communities. Infection rates in many American Indian communities were higher than in the general population. Many tribes enacted lockdowns of tribal land, which meant a loss of revenue from tourism and other industries. It also meant WTP trainers were often unable to enter tribal lands to deliver training. To help tribal communities overcome these challenges, NIEHS WTP developed [health and safety resources on COVID-19](#) for workers and communities. WTP grantees also pivoted to offer training online, particularly in the early phases of the pandemic. Through grantee-led training, tribal workers gained skills and knowledge to safely handle hazardous materials and respond to emergencies and disasters. Similarly, tribal workers and communities gained more knowledge about how to navigate, respond to, and prevent exposure to infectious agents, like COVID-19.

NIEHS WTP also recognizes the importance of inviting tribal stakeholders to the table and listening to their concerns. This dialogue helps NIEHS WTP and grantees better understand the various challenges that persist in tribal communities and find appropriate solutions. In early 2021, the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice's (EJ IWG) EJ and Natural Disaster Subcommittee, co-led by NIEHS WTP, hosted three virtual Regional Town Hall Meetings. The purpose of the Town Hall Meetings was to gain a better understanding of how

A welcome sign reminds residents and visitors about precautions against COVID-19, reading, "Entering Ft. Peck Indian Reservation. Respect everyone and yourself." Masks on the sign's Assiniboine and Sioux figures read: "social distance, sanitize, gloves, masks."
(Photo courtesy of AFC WST)



natural disasters impact minority, low-income, and underserved communities, and how the federal government can better provide support to these communities to prepare and respond to their needs before, during, and after natural disasters.

In the West Coast Town Hall held on March 29, 2021, representatives from different groups spoke on tribal concerns. Alaska Operations Office (Environmental Protection Office Region 10), Hoopa Valley Tribe, and Native American Environmental Protection Coalition representatives participated. Community members and volunteers in western states received a three-hour disaster response follow-up training April 7 from two WTP grantees, Western Region Universities Consortium and Alabama Fire College. Representatives from the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe and the National Tribal Emergency Management Council discussed how they handle disasters and emergency response within American Indian tribes.

In October 2022, NIEHS WTP participated in DOE's Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response Tribal Committee meeting. Participating organizations shared the Biden Administration's new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on streamlining funding for vocational training and workforce development among American Indians and Alaska Natives. The MOA shares goals with WTP for training and workforce development among historically underserved populations, such as American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Tribes and Alaska Native Villages Reached

In program years 2018 through 2022, WTP provided training to 105 American Indian tribal nations or Alaska Native villages in 30 states. Training efforts have reached these populations in nine of the 10 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regions. Figure 1 shows the number of tribes and Alaska Native Corporations* reached in each state. States with the highest number of tribes or Alaska Native Corporations reached through training include Alaska, Arizona, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin. Figure 2 shows the geographic spread of trainees across Alaska, including 13 Alaska Native Villages under 6 Alaska Native Corporations.

A full list of tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and Alaska Native Villages that received training in program years 2018 through 2022 is available at the end of this document.

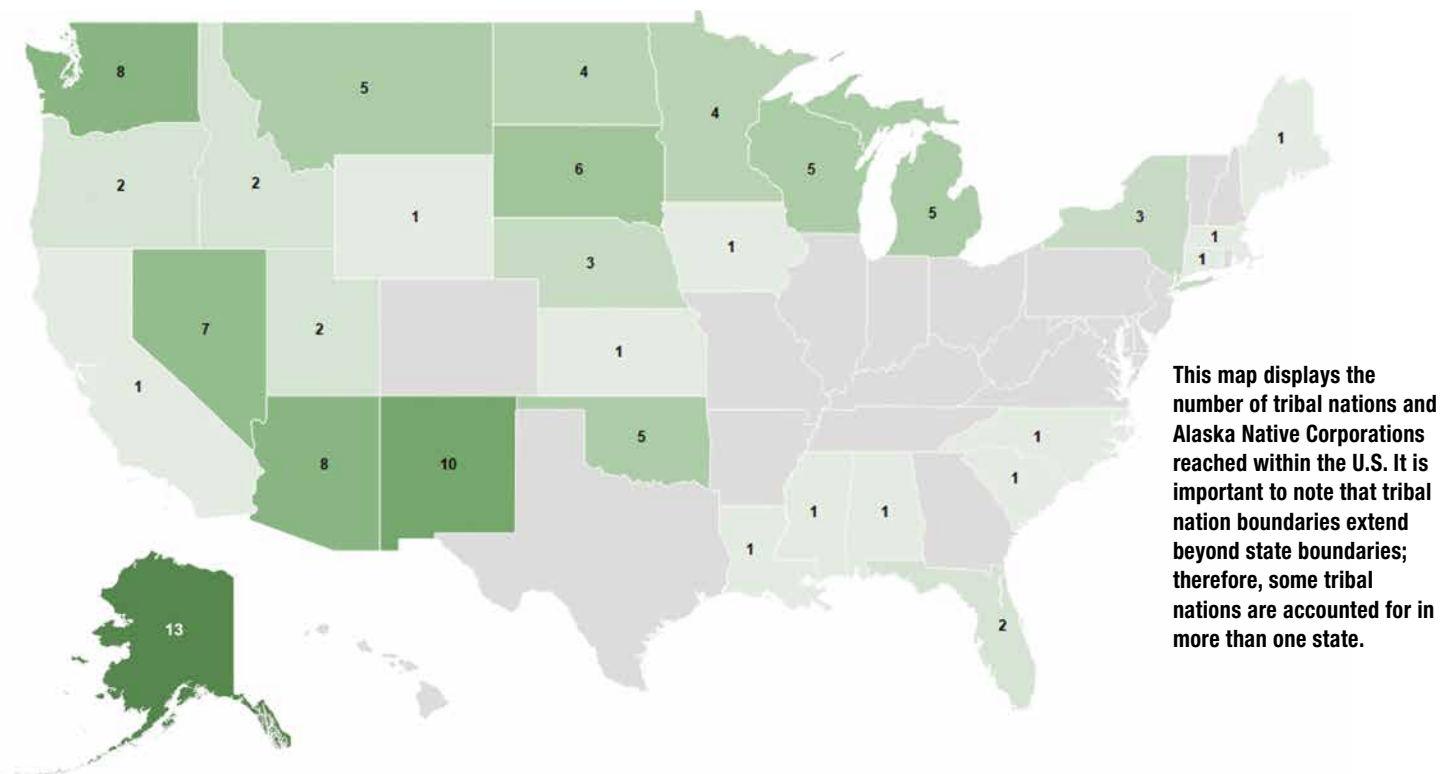


Figure 1. Tribal Nations and Alaska Native Corporations Reached Through NIEHS WTP Training in the U.S. (2018 – 2022 Program Years)

* There are 13 Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs), which were organized under the laws of the State of Alaska in accordance with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1601, et seq.) Alaska Native Villages and Communities are found within these ANCs. See the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.



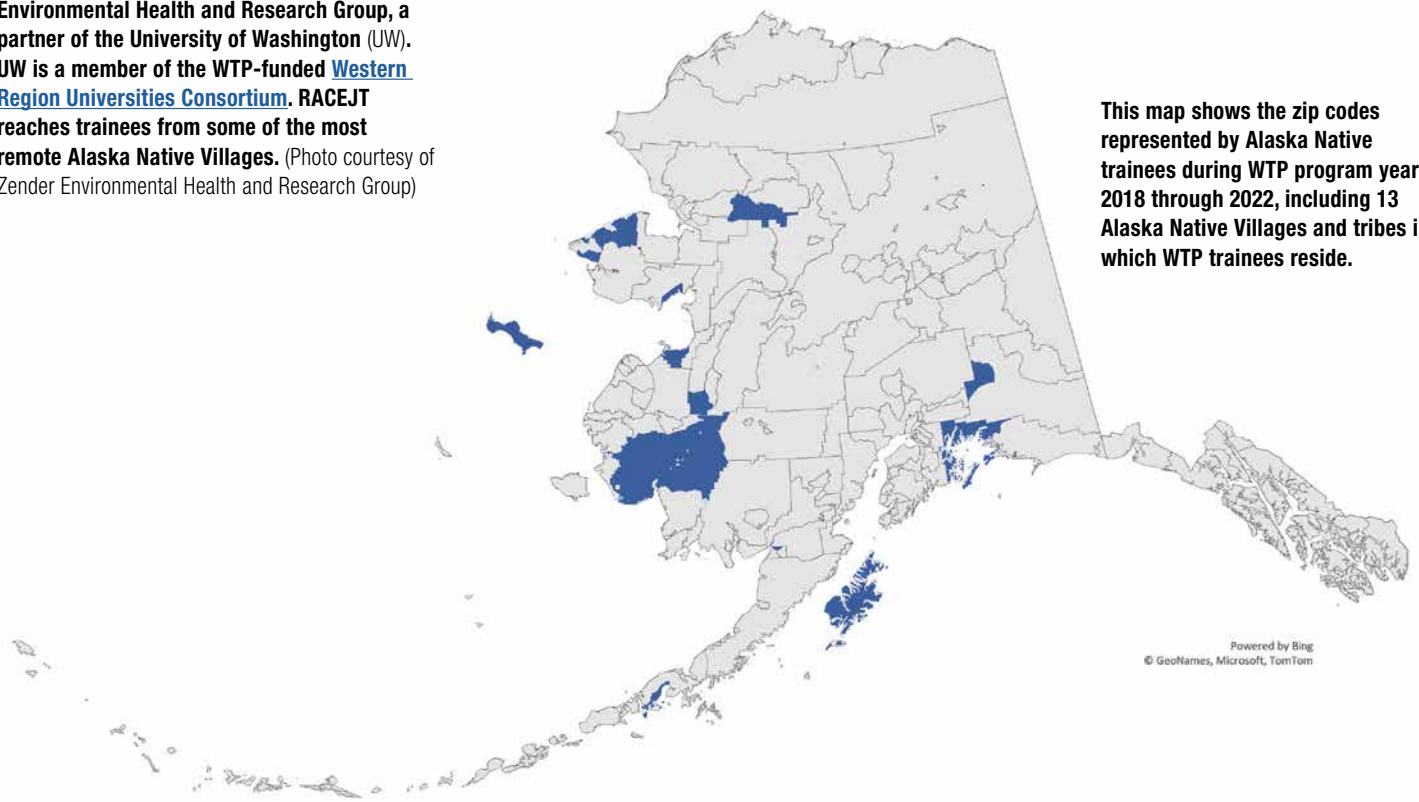
Trainees from the Rural Alaska Community Environmental Job Training (RACEJT) program's 2021 class learn to use equipment needed to safely handle dangerous chemicals. The RACEJT program is facilitated by Zender Environmental Health and Research Group, a partner of the University of Washington (UW). UW is a member of the WTP-funded [Western Region Universities Consortium](#). RACEJT reaches trainees from some of the most remote Alaska Native Villages. (Photo courtesy of Zender Environmental Health and Research Group)



Trainees from the RACEJT program train on safe decontamination practices. (Photo courtesy of Zender Environmental)



A 2021 RACEJT graduate works in his new job as a refrigerant recovery technician in Kongiganak, Alaska. (Photo courtesy of Zender Environmental)



This map shows the zip codes represented by Alaska Native trainees during WTP program years 2018 through 2022, including 13 Alaska Native Villages and tribes in which WTP trainees reside.

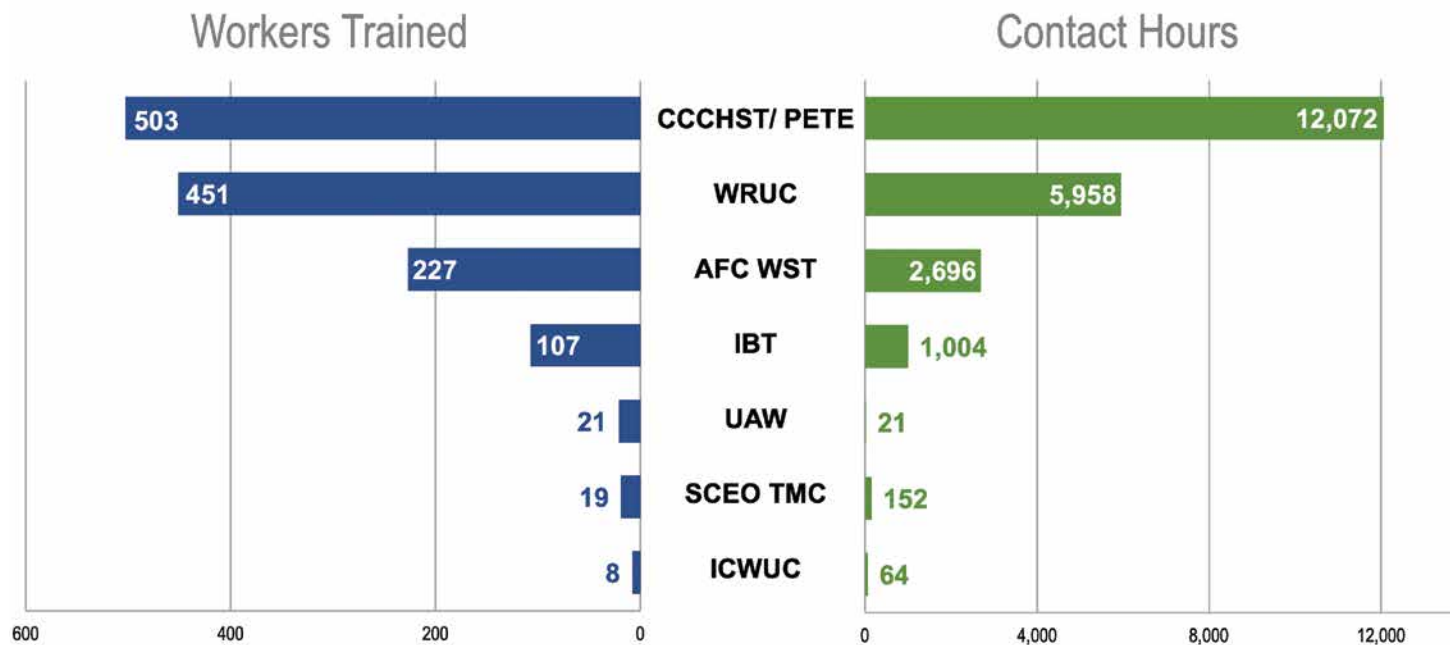
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Figure 2. Zip Codes in Alaska Represented by Alaska Native Trainees of the NIEHS WTP (2018 – 2022 Program Years)

Trainings by the Numbers

Figure 3 shows the number of workers trained and contact hours achieved for each of these grantees in program year 2022.

Figure 3. This chart shows the number of American Indian and Alaska Native workers trained during the NIEHS WTP 2022 program year by grantee. The seven grantees with specific programs and partnerships focused on training tribal members are shown. Contact hours represent the number of hours of training provided multiplied by the number of people trained.



- **CCCHST/ PETE:** [Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training/Partnership for Environmental Technology and Education](#)
- **WRUC:** [Western Region Universities Consortium](#)
- **AFC WST:** [Alabama Fire College Workplace Safety Training](#)
- **IBT:** [International Brotherhood of Teamsters](#)
- **UAW:** [International Union, United Auto Workers](#)
- **SCEO TMC:** [Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization Tony Mazzocchi Center](#)
- **ICWUC:** [International Chemical Workers Union Council](#)

Grantee Training Highlights

The following examples highlight training accomplishments by NIEHS WTP grantees who have specific programs and partnerships focused on training American Indians and Alaska Natives.



Nationwide Training: Building Capacity for American Indians in Hazardous Chemical Safety and Awareness

The [Alabama Fire College Workplace Safety Training \(AFC WST\)](#) program delivers training to American Indian tribes focusing on emergency response, disaster preparedness, and incident command.

Partnerships with external organizations have enabled AFC WST to gain a broad reach. By working with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society and United South and Eastern Tribes, AFC WST connects with tribal members across the country for training, such as those employed by law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire service, natural resource, and public works agencies. Additionally, American Indian trainees learn how to pass on knowledge and training methods to others in their tribes through WST's peer training courses.



To address the COVID-19 pandemic, AFC WST pivoted to offering some courses online – broadening the overall reach – and made needed updates to training equipment. Also, AFC WST and the Deep South Biosafety Worker Training Program, a former grantee based at the University of Alabama, adapted Ebola/Infectious Disease training materials to a one-hour online training course offered to American Indian tribes.

During the 2022 program year, AFC WST provided training to 23 tribes in 14 states. Specifically, AFC WST delivered 22 courses on hazardous materials and emergency response to 227 American Indian responders and hazardous waste workers with 2,696 contact hours of training. These trainings have reached American Indian tribes in all U.S. regions.

TOP: Trainees practice HazMat control techniques. AFC WST provided HazMat technician training to Duck Valley Shoshone Tribe members who are part of a county-wide team that provides mutual aid response for the northeast region of Nevada.

(Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

BOTTOM: Trainees from the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe in New York learn to put on oxygen masks and HazMat suits during hazardous waste worker training. Practicing suiting up with an experienced trainer helps tribe members prepare to act quickly to protect themselves and their communities in an emergency.

(Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

Some examples of the trainees reached by AFC WST from 2018 to 2022 include:

- **Alabama**—Trainees represent the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, a tribe AFC WST has been working with for two decades. The training has focused on incident command and HazMat. Since Hurricane Katrina, the tribe has become a regional leader in emergency response for severe storms and HazMat incidents. In fact, the tribe's emergency preparedness coordinator continues to be involved in AFC WST's advisory board activities.
- **New York**—Trainees represent the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and the Seneca Nation of Indians. While AFC WST has had a direct partnership with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe for years, the tribe is closely connected to the surrounding community, so the 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER),

HazMat Technician Class, and [emergency response trainings benefit both the tribe and local non-tribal residents](#).

- **Mississippi**—Trainees in Mississippi represent the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, who have participated in emergency response and hazard awareness training. Tribal conservation officers, emergency responders, and the housing authority continue to benefit from this training.
- **Montana**—During the 2022 program year, AFC WST offered a 40-hour HAZWOPER training reaching the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.
- **Nevada**—Trainees represent many tribes, including the Elko Band Tribe, Ely Shoshone Tribe, Te-Moak Tribe, and others who are part of the Local Emergency Planning Committee in Elko County, Nevada. Committee and tribal members receive training focused on incident command and HazMat.
- **Nationwide reach online**—Thanks to AFC WST’s ability to pivot many courses online during the COVID-19 pandemic, crucial worker safety trainings reached more than twice as many tribes in 2021 and 2022 as in 2018 and 2019. New tribes reached include the Catawba Indian Nation in South Carolina, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians in Florida, Oglala Sioux and Standing Rock Sioux Tribes in South Dakota, Oneida Nation in Wisconsin, White Earth Nation in Minnesota, Spokane Tribe of Indians and Yakama Nation in Washington State, and many more.

TRAINEE FEEDBACK

“The Elko Country, Nevada, Local Emergency Planning Committee has many tribal agencies as members. Since the AFC training, we have had two incidents where we used the training. The first was an unknown substance discarded on the side of the road in five-gallon buckets. The team suited up and was able to mitigate the incident, securing the buckets to prevent spillage and monitoring the air. The second was a train derailment with multiple cars carrying a mixed load of consumables, hazardous materials, and munitions. Aluminum oxide was released into the environment from breached cars. The HazMat team was able to identify the material, monitor the air, and provide decontamination to those exposed. Since the class, our crews have been very well involved with keeping up their skills. The AFC class was outstanding. It has benefited the HazMat team and laid the foundation for development of a formalized regional HazMat team for the five counties in Northeast Nevada.”

– Trainee from the Elko Fire Department following a Hazardous Materials Technician training course with AFC WST in Nevada

“Your training already saved my life. I found two barrels in a field yesterday. Normally, I would have just opened them, but because of your training, I knew better. I tried to read the placards but could only make out the respiratory sensitizer and acute toxicity symbols. I moved upwind and called in the tribe’s Brownfields Coordinator.”

– Trainee and American Indian Training Coordinator from the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation following a Hazardous Waste Worker Training course with AFC WST in Montana



TOP: A trainee from the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana learns how to suit up in protective gear during his 40-hour HAZWOPER training with the AFC WST program.
(Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

BOTTOM: A barrel with a shredded label appears in a field on Fort Peck Indian Reservation, in the territory of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes. Because of AFC WST training, reservation employees knew the contents were hazardous and treated the barrel with appropriate caution.
(Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

A Prince William Sound College student takes part in oil spill-response training on a fishing vessel as part of WTP grantee Partnership for Environmental Technology Education's disaster-response program. (Photo courtesy of PETE)



TRAINEE FEEDBACK

I appreciate that the PETE Instructor was such an interactive, funny, and kind teacher. He made it easy to stay engaged in the content. I learned a lot of material I have never been exposed to before and I'm very grateful I had the opportunity to take this class. Although the class was virtual, the instructor made it seem like we were all in the classroom.

– Trainee in the 2022 Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College training

Partnering with Colleges to Deliver Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Training

The Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training, administered by the [National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education \(PETE\)](#), partners with over 130 community, technical, or tribal colleges; universities; businesses; and community-based organizations across the nation to deliver disaster-preparedness training.

Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) are integral and essential to their communities, creating environments that foster American Indian culture, languages, and traditions. There are roughly 32 accredited TCUs in the U.S. They are often the only postsecondary institutions within some of the nation's poorest rural areas. They also serve as community resources for crucial social services and add hope to communities that suffer from high rates of poverty and unemployment.

TCUs nationwide have faced ups and downs with student enrollment and faculty retention due to the impacts of COVID-19. Significant budget cuts and layoffs, as well as a loss in student registrations, impacted these schools during the pandemic. Despite these challenges, PETE worked with TCUs to deliver training virtually. For example, in March 2021, PETE delivered an online Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10-hour Construction course and OSHA 15-hour Disaster Site Worker course for Saginaw Chippewa tribal community personnel and tribal members among the faculty, staff, and students at Saginaw Chippewa College, a tribal college located in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

Saginaw Chippewa College also serves as PETE's liaison to recruit college instructors from other TCUs and local tribal government employees, so they are prepared to deliver disaster-preparedness training to their communities. In 2022, the college liaison connected PETE with Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College in Newtown, North Dakota, and in April, PETE was able to deliver an OSHA 10-hour Construction course and 15-hour Disaster Site Worker course for tribal college personnel and tribal community leaders.

PETE also has a longstanding partnership with Prince William Sound College in Valdez, Alaska. Since 1998, this college has assisted Alyeska Pipeline Service Company in conducting annual oil spill-response and disaster-response training, to prepare for any possible tanker leaks or oil pipeline leaks within the Prince William Sound Fishing Fleet. The college and company deliver oil-spill-response training to local fishing vessels, many of which are owned or operated by American Indian tribal members. Several trainees have successfully gained oil sector employment in the area.

During program year 2022, PETE partnered with Prince William Sound College to deliver oil spill and response courses in the ports of Kodiak, Homer, Whittier, Cordova, and Valdez, Alaska. This training involves a combination of virtual, classroom, and

hands-on work using the response and clean-up equipment and is conducted both on the fishing vessels and in the port.

Additionally, from 2021 to 2022, two trainees – one from Navajo Technical University in New Mexico and another from Zender Environmental Health and Research Group in Alaska – completed PETE’s GreatEST Institute. The GreatEST (Great Environmental Safety Training) Institute is a two-week train-the-trainer event that delivers required certifications for public and private responders and workers on topics such as waste site worker health and safety, industrial emergency response, and more. Both the trainees who participated are now members of the Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training.

Alaska: Providing Job Training for Alaska Natives and Rural Villages

Many worker health and safety challenges are particularly acute in Alaska. Transportation and infrastructure costs make certain safety practices, like the hauling of dangerous waste out of the region, cost-prohibitive and hazardous. To help address these challenges, the [Western Region Universities Consortium \(WRUC\)](#) provides a variety of courses to tribes in Alaska through consortium member University of Washington (UW).



An Alabama Fire College trainee from the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation dons protective gear during HAZWOPER training. AFC’s Worker Safety Training program trained 227 American Indian tribe members in 2022.

(Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

TRAINEE FEEDBACK

“Right after I finished the class, I got hired. This training provided me with all the skills and things I needed to know before I got into this field.”

– Alaska Native program participant following environmental remediation training from Zender Environmental, a local partner of the University of Washington, a WRUC member

The 2021 and 2022 Zender program trainees gather in Anchorage for a combined hands-on training and graduation ceremony from the RACEJT program. (Photo courtesy of Zender Environmental)



TOP: A burnbox stands in a rural community's landfill, surrounded by trash waiting to be burned.

BOTTOM: Broken-down equipment sits at the edge of a landfill. When vehicles, equipment, or electronics break or age out, it can be difficult to remove them from the most remote and under-resourced Alaska Native communities, which presents hazards to health and the environment.

(Photos courtesy of Zender Environmental)

- UW partners with Zender Environmental Health and Research Group to facilitate their Rural Alaska Community Employment Job Training (RACEJT) program. RACEJT provides environmental training and employment for residents in Alaska Native Villages impacted by environmental health issues. Since villages are often remote, few have adequate disposal methods for hazardous wastes, such as vehicle batteries, electronics, and chemicals. Trash burning and open landfills near villages are legal and common. To counteract health threats from these practices, Zender trains unemployed and underemployed residents in environmental remediation work. Lynn Zender, director of Zender Environmental, stated, “Our goal is to have trained graduates in every community acting as first responders.” On December 7, 2022, Zender presented the RACEJT program to a national audience during the NIEHS Partnerships for Environmental Public Health webinar, “[Safety & Health Training for American Indians & Alaska Natives in the Western U.S.](#)”
- UW collaborates with the Alaska Forum on the Environment Training and Apprenticeship Program, offering hazardous materials and waste management training. The program provides industry-recognized trainings and job-placement assistance for environmental and natural resource-related jobs in the state, fields with expanding employment opportunities. The Alaska Forum travels to remote villages to present hazardous materials training and provides online courses as requested.

TRAINEE FEEDBACK

“This training helped me to better understand hazards in our community. It opened my eyes. It taught me to better prevent contamination from solid waste, properly dispose of waste, and use the proper PPE. It will help me make the community better. My recommendation is for everyone to take this training.”

– Alaska Native program participant following environmental remediation training from Zender Environmental, a local partner of the University of Washington, a WRUC member



Arizona and New Mexico: Delivering Training to Railroad Workers on Tribal Reservations

The [International Brotherhood of Teamsters \(IBT\)](#) delivers health and safety training to workers involved in the remediation, construction, and transport of hazardous materials to and from U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) facilities. IBT also works cooperatively with tribal communities living near DOE sites to increase awareness of hazards and build capacity for emergency response.

Railroad and other transportation workers face occupational risks such as accidental releases of hazardous materials, hazardous waste exposure during cleanup projects, and hazardous waste and materials transported via trucks, rail cars, and intermodal shipping containers. For rural and remote tribal nations across the U.S., these risks are heightened by lack of proximity to and resources for extensive health and safety training. Trainees may be learning about safety information for the first time, despite being employed for years.

In Winslow, Arizona, located on the outskirts of the Navajo Nation reservation, IBT delivers OSHA-specific training courses to American Indian railroad workers. The courses include hands-on activities, and cover topics such as general industry, transportation security, chemical emergency response, and radiological transportation training. These courses help railroad workers enhance their awareness and knowledge of hazardous materials they may encounter on the job, and skills to protect their health.

For example, IBT has delivered their 40-hour Chemical Emergency Response course to railroad workers for years, and it continues to receive positive feedback from trainees.

IBT also delivers training to railroad workers living on reservations near Albuquerque, New Mexico. These workers support the transportation of radiological materials to and from Los Alamos National Laboratory as well as other DOE facilities. Examples of courses include the OSHA 10 Hour General Industry Safety and Health course and the Condensed Modular Emergency Response Radiological Transportation Training.

Overall, by participating in the IBT courses, railroad workers receive training certification required by OSHA standards and U.S. Department of Transportation regulations; qualify for or continue employment; and acquire knowledge that permits them to work more safely.

Trainers and trainees from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters gather on a famous corner after their 40-hour Chemical Emergency Response course in Winslow, Arizona in March 2019.

(Photo courtesy of IBT)



Trainees learn to identify hazardous materials during the IBT 16-hour Modular Emergency Response Radiological Transportation training course in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in November 2019. (Photo courtesy of IBT)

TRAINEE FEEDBACK

“I learned the importance of having a backup plan at home and work for situations that may happen. I will be talking with my family about evacuations and a meeting place, should we need them. This course is good for work and home.”

“The biggest thing I took from this class is how to respond to hazards. I had no idea all the information provided in the Emergency Response Guidebook and New Jersey Safety Sheets.”

“There was a gas fire at my apartment complex and I went into the apartment uninformed about the dangers of hazardous materials or knowledge of what I was dealing with. I could have become part of the problem, had the circumstances been different. After taking this class, my eyes have been opened about how differently this situation could have turned out. This is not a risk I would take again after this classroom learning.”

– Trainees from the IBT 16-hour Modular Emergency Response Radiological Transportation Training course in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in November 2019



Trainees learn to suit up in protective gear during the IBT 40-hour Chemical Emergency Response course in Winslow, Arizona, in March 2019. (Photo courtesy of IBT)

Arizona and New Mexico: Collaborating with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Southwest

Arizona State University (ASU), also part of WRUC, offers courses to American Indians in New Mexico and Arizona as part of a program coordinated with the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), through the Navajo Region Division of Environmental and Safety Management. ASU is the only provider of HAZWOPER training, as well as other key hazardous materials courses, for BIA in this region. In 2022, ASU trained 196 American Indian workers in 6 courses for the BIA. Other courses provided included Pollution Prevention and Hazard Communication.

ASU offers a number of American Indian open-enrollment courses in coordination with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The classes include attendees from multiple Southwest tribes. The majority are Navajo, since the three main training sites are located in the heart of the Navajo Nation (Tuba City and Chinle, Arizona, and Gallup, New Mexico). A number of Hopi Nation members – a tribe surrounded by the Navajo Nation in northeastern Arizona – are included in each class. In addition, several trainees come from the White Mountain Apache Tribe of the Fort Apache Reservation in eastern Arizona.

During the pandemic, ASU provided a COVID-19 awareness class to tribal members in the Southwest through their partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Oregon: Raising COVID-19 Awareness for Pre-Apprentices

WRUC also provides training to increase opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged and underserved communities to obtain environmental careers. These efforts are part of their NIEHS-funded Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP), a unique training program area within the broader WTP.

In Portland, Oregon, WRUC member UW partners with local nonprofit Constructing Hope, a construction pre-apprenticeship program. In 2022, seven American Indians from the metropolitan Portland area were trained. Classwork included a COVID-19 overview for students to ensure they could complete the in-person course safely, were aware of the current pandemic conditions, and knew how to keep themselves safe.

Idaho: Delivering HAZWOPER Training for Tribes

The **International Union of Operating Engineers National Training Fund (NTF)** delivers HAZWOPER training courses to members of the Nez Perce Reservation.¹

This training is important because it has allowed the Nez Perce Tribe to form organizations mirroring the federal OSHA to provide occupational health and safety oversight for the tribe.

In 2019, the International Union of Operating Engineers National Training Fund (NTF) delivered a 40-hour HAZWOPER course on the Nez Perce Reservation. Overall support from the tribe was excellent and a total of 18 students participated. In March 2020, NTF postponed a 40-hour HAZWOPER course and 8-hour refresher on the Nez Perce Reservation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

North Dakota: Advancing Emergency Preparedness for Tribes

For nearly 20 years, WTP grantee the **Midwest Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training** has offered training through their consortium members to the Three Affiliated Tribes in North Dakota, preparing tribal members to act in case of an emergency. The Three Affiliated Tribes, otherwise known as the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (MHA) Nation, are located on the Fort Berthold Reservation, which lies at the heart of the massive Bakken oil fields. As a longtime partner of the Midwest Consortium, the Three Affiliated Tribes have built the capacity to help deliver training to residents and emergency responders in North Dakota.

Petroleum and natural gas products from the Bakken oil fields are constantly moving in and out of the reservation via trucks, railways, and pipelines. As a result, tribal workers and residents on the reservation face safety hazards, including spills, tank ruptures,

¹ The IUOE was a WTP grantee until 2021 and thereafter became a participating organization through CPWR—The Center for Construction Research and Training.



TOP: A member of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation attends a 40-hour HAZWOPER training in Poplar, Montana. Attendees learned both content knowledge and hands-on skills to identify and handle hazardous materials.

(Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

BOTTOM: Trainees from the Rural Alaska Community Environmental Job Training (RACEJT) program practice resuscitation as part of their training as hazard first-responders. WRUC partners with Zender Environmental to deliver training to Alaska Natives from rural communities.

(Photo courtesy of Zender Environmental)



TOP: Trainees from the Pueblo of Zia in New Mexico take part in the classroom portion of their HazMat training with Alabama Fire College trainers. (Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

BOTTOM: Leadership from the Umatilla Indian Reservation Tribal Employment Rights Office gather with Rodrigo Toscano (center), a senior coordinator for labor and environmental education with the United Steelworkers Tony Mazzocchi Center, during a Radiological Control Technician training program. (Photo courtesy of USW TMC)

derailments, pipeline leaks, fires, and explosions, as well as serious health risks due to air pollution from heavy truck traffic.

To prevent or mitigate these risks, members of the Three Affiliated Tribes delivered a two-day, 16-hour training program for interagency emergency responders related to large-volume fuel releases. The program included a tabletop exercise. The Three Affiliated Tribes training center also delivered multiple three-hour HAZWOPER Awareness, four-hour Reporting Environmental Releases, and four-hour Personal Protective Equipment programs.

After their training in the 16-hour program, participants said local leaders must be brought together to understand conditions at the fuel terminal in New Town, North Dakota, on the Fort Berthold Reservation. They also recognized tribal government departments need to work together, and with cooperating agencies and organizations, in the event of hazardous situations like large-scale fuel releases.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed many in-person training efforts, the Three Affiliated Tribes continued to respond to urgent needs. For example, in 2020, the program director for the Three Affiliated Tribes worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to send out critical COVID-19 awareness to tribal members and also participated in efforts to ensure isolation housing on the reservation, during the time many hotels were being converted to housing.

Washington: Improving Tribal Capacity for Superfund Cleanup

The **International Union of Operating Engineers National Training Fund (NTF)** provides training to workers and members of the Spokane Indian Tribe in Washington State. Training is delivered to tribal workers from several departments on the reservation, including Tribal Housing, the Tribal Environmental Department, and the Tribal Forestry Department.

Others tribal workers are trained to protect themselves from exposure to hazardous materials during cleanup activities at the Midnite Mine Superfund site in Washington State, which is located within the Spokane Indian Reservation. After 30 years of uranium mining activities at the Midnite Mine (from 1954 to 1981), roughly 2.4 million tons of stockpiled ore and 33 million tons of waste rock remain at the site, which poses a potential threat to health and the environment. The NTF efforts ensure that Spokane

tribal members receive HAZWOPER and OSHA Construction Outreach training, enabling them to protect themselves and gain employment on the mine site.

Through a train-the-trainer model, the NTF also teaches tribal workers to become course instructors so they can train others on the reservation.

The NTF's trainings for the Midnite Mine site cleanup are funded by the NIEHS Hazardous Waste Worker Training Program, through WTP grantee [CPWR–The Center for Construction Research and Training](#), and the NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program.

Washington: Preparing Workers for Hazardous Materials Cleanup at the Hanford Site

Using funds from the [NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program](#), the [Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization Tony Mazzocchi Center \(SCEO TMC\)](#) provides [health and safety trainings](#) to protect nearby tribes from hazardous waste at the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington. For nearly 30 years, Hanford produced tons of plutonium for use in the atomic weapons program. Today, it is the site of one of the world's largest nuclear cleanup efforts, managed by DOE.

SCEO TMC works with the Tribal Employment Rights Office of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, about 20 miles from the Hanford Site, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation close by in Oregon. Recently, two Yakama Nation youth completed SCEO TMC trainings and went on to pursue careers as environmental health and safety specialists.

SCEO TMC is now partnering with the two Nations to bolster the tribes' OSHA training capabilities. The partnership provided effective training to the newly formed health and safety training committees on tribal lands. Working closely with tribal regional employment officers, the partnership was able to assess, select, and train 12 tribal members as OSHA outreach trainers. This is the first group of such trainers in the region. The goal of the two partnerships is to create a corps of OSHA General Industry trainers who can deliver crucial trainings to others in their communities. The two Nations, and now the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, are currently training more members to become OSHA construction outreach trainers.

These trainings increase the tribes' ability to respond to incidents or emergencies that may happen on or surrounding sites like Hanford, such as radiological events, train derailments, underground pipe breaks or leaks, or transport truck accidents.

TRAINEE FEEDBACK

“Our tribe absolutely needs and requires your fantastic certification trainings!”

– Tribal leader from Washington State, following Incident Command System training from AFC WST

Related Links

- [NIEHS WTP Grantees](#)
- [Story on WRUC efforts to train underserved American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and communities in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska](#)
- [Webinars on Safety and Health Training for American Indians and Alaska Natives in the Western U.S.: Session One on the Western Regional Universities Consortium, and Session Two on Alabama Fire College Worker Safety Training and the Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization's Tony Mazzocchi Center.](#)
- [Story on International Brotherhood of Teamsters: Navajo area railroad workers learn protective skills](#)
- [Story on the Three Affiliated Tribes: NIEHS Supports Tribal Emergency Preparedness in North Dakota](#)

For more information on the [NIEHS Worker Training Program](#), visit <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/wtp>.

Tribal Nations in the Lower 48 States Reached Through NIEHS WTP Training (2018 – 2022 Program Years)

Below is the full list of American Indian tribes who had training participants in WTP program years 2018 through 2022. Tribal names are consistent with the April 9, 2021, Federal Register notice on “Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services from the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs.”

ALABAMA

Poarch Band of Creek Indians

ARIZONA

Gila River Indian Community of the Gila River Indian Reservation

Hopi Tribe of Arizona

Hualapai Indian Tribe of the Hualapai Indian Reservation

Navajo Nation

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community of the Salt River Reservation

San Carlos Apache Tribe of the San Carlos Reservation

White Mountain Apache Tribe of the Fort Apache Reservation

Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe

CALIFORNIA

Hoopa Valley Tribe

CONNECTICUT

Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe

FLORIDA

Miccosukee Tribe of Indians

Seminole Tribe of Florida

IDAHO

Nez Perce Tribe

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation

IOWA

Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi (Meskwaki Nation)

KANSAS

Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska

LOUISIANA

Jena Band of Choctaw Indians

MAINE

Passamaquoddy Tribe

MASSACHUSETTS

Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

MICHIGAN

Bay Mills Indian Community

Little River Band of Ottawa Indians

Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians

Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan

Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

MINNESOTA

Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians

Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - Bois Forte Band

Shakoppe Mdewakanton Sioux Community of Minnesota

Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - White Earth Nation

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

MONTANA

Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation

Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana

Chippewa Cree Indians of the Rocky Boy's Reservation

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

Crow Nation of Montana

NEBRASKA

Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

Santee Sioux Nation

Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska

NEVADA

Ely Shoshone Tribe of Nevada

Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribes of the Fort McDermitt Indian Reservation

Paiute-Shoshone Tribe of the Fallon Reservation and Colony

Reno-Sparks Indian Colony

Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation

Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada

Walker River Paiute Tribe of the Walker River Reservation



A tribal emergency response vehicle awaits its next use in the Reno Sparks Indian Colony in Nevada. (Photo courtesy of AFC WST)

NEW MEXICO

Jicarilla Apache Nation
Mescalero Apache Tribe of the Mescalero Reservation
Navajo Nation
Pueblo of Acoma
Pueblo of Isleta
Pueblo of Jemez
Pueblo of Laguna
Pueblo of San Felipe
Pueblo of Sandia
Pueblo of Zia

NEW YORK

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe
Seneca Nation of Indians
Tonawanda Band of Seneca

NORTH CAROLINA

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

NORTH DAKOTA

Spirt Lake Tribe
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North and South Dakota
Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota

OKLAHOMA

Citizen Potawatomi Nation
Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma
Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma
Muscogee Creek Nation
Pawnee Nation

OREGON

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Klamath Tribes

SOUTH CAROLINA

Catawba Indian Nation

SOUTH DAKOTA

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of the Cheyenne River Reservation
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe of the Lower Brule Reservation
Oglala Sioux
Rosebud Sioux Tribe of the Rosebud Indian Reservation
Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North and South Dakota

UTAH

Navajo Nation
Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah & Ouray Reservation

WASHINGTON

Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Kalispel Indian Community of the Kalispel Reservation
Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe
Spokane Tribe of the Spokane Reservation
Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
Tulalip Tribes of Washington

WISCONSIN

Forest County Potawatomi Community
Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin
Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin
Oneida Nation
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin

WYOMING

Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation

Tribal and Inter-Tribal Organizations

Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan)
Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (Arizona)
Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (nationwide)
Southern Indian Health Council (California)
Tribal Solid Waste Advisory Network (Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Oregon)

Tribal Colleges and Universities

Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (Michigan)
Saginaw Chippewa College (North Dakota)

Alaska Native Villages Reached Through NIEHS WTP Training (2018 – 2022 Program Years)

Below is the full list of Alaska Native Corporations and Alaska Native Villages who had training participants in WTP program years 2018 through 2022. Tribal names are consistent with the April 9, 2021, Federal Register notice on “Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services from the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs.”

BERING STRAITS NATIVE CORPORATION

- Native Village of Brevig Mission
- Native Village of Koyuk
- Native Village of Savoonga
- Native Village of Shishmaref

BRISTOL BAY NATIVE CORPORATION

- Naknek Native Village

CALISTA CORPORATION

- Akiak Native Community
- Native Village of Kalskag
- Native Village of Kipnuk
- Native Village of Kongiganak

DOYON LIMITED

- Holy Cross Village

KONIAG INC.

- City of Larsen Bay
- Native Village of Port Lions

NANA REGIONAL CORPORATION

- Native Village of Shungnak

In remote parts of Alaska, small aircraft, all-terrain vehicles, and snowmobiles are the main ways to deliver people, supplies, and mail to Alaska Native communities in the fall, winter, and spring. Barges carrying bulk supplies can only make the passage a few times in the summer months. (Photo courtesy of Zender Environmental)



RACEJT trainees from the 2021 class learn to safely package vehicle batteries and electronics waste for removal and recycling or disposal, a process called backhaul. Grantee WRUC and their partner, Zender Environmental, leverage a partnership with the Backhaul Alaska program to remove hazardous wastes from remote communities before they end up in burnboxes or landfills. (Photo courtesy of Zender Environmental)





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