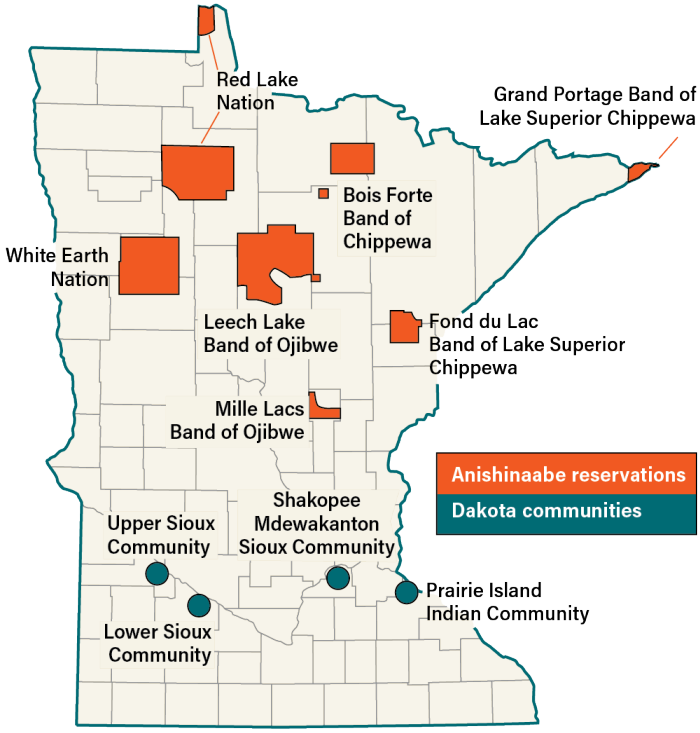


Energy Efficiency

THROUGH MINNESOTA CONSERVATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM: BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR Native Nations

Eleven Native nations share the same geography as the State of Minnesota. Each nation approaches energy conservation, renewable energy production, and greenhouse gas emissions reduction in accordance with their traditional environmental knowledge. This means that these nations have their own energy needs and energy sovereign goals. While energy efficiency is important to many Tribal governments and members, there are many barriers to achieving their goals. For instance, most Native nations have limited internal staff capacity to explore, plan, and implement energy efficiency investments.

To better understand the existing barriers and opportunities for Native nations to invest in energy efficiency, the Minnesota Department of Commerce funded this project to engage and collect feedback from each of the 11 Native nations in Minnesota.

Project Goals

1. Identifying the specific energy-efficiency needs of Tribal governments and members and the barriers to implementation of needed energy-efficiency improvements.
2. Providing specific, actionable recommendations to develop successful Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) opportunities that serve the needs of Tribal governments and members.

INDIGENOUS LANDS:

- Comprise approximately 5% of total Minnesota land area
- Compromise 0.8% of total electricity and 0.3% of natural gas consumption in Minnesota
- Are more reliant on electricity, purchased fuels and wood for space and water heating than other areas in the state
- Utilize less air conditioning compared to the rest of the state
- Have newer residential buildings compared to the rest of Minnesota
- Have more residents with a high energy burden compared to the state average
- Represent roughly 1% of total potential energy savings

PROJECT PARTNERS

Indian Land Tenure FOUNDATION
LHB
MTERA MIDWEST TRIBAL ENERGY RESOURCES ASSOCIATION
slipstream

Engagement Strategies

1. Establishment of a Tribal Advisory Committee.
2. Individual interviews with Tribal representatives.
3. Individual interviews with representatives of energy utilities that serve Tribal governments and members.

Recommendations

1 **Provide dedicated resources for Native nations to develop and implement energy and climate plans that incorporate CIP across a portfolio of projects benefiting people and businesses on reservation.**

RECOMMENDATION: Dedicate a Commerce staff person to liaison between each Native nation in Minnesota and their energy utility service providers. Provide financial support for each Native nation to employ staff who are dedicated to energy planning and implementation.

RATIONALE: Addresses staff capacity shortages within Tribal governments and develops ongoing interaction to work together towards goals.

2 **Develop guidance for energy service providers on strategies for connecting with Indigenous leaders, staff, and members.**

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a guide for utilities to maximize their communications with Native nations. Require that each utility serving Indigenous customers allocate resources for a liaison.

RATIONALE: Increased emphasis on communications with Native nations will foster deep relationships between them and their utilities. This will enable more effective partnerships to achieve energy conservation goals.

3 **Support the Tribal Energy Council comprised of representatives from each of the 11 Native nations in Minnesota.**

RECOMMENDATION: Participate in council by providing direction on ways that Native nations can leverage existing funding, including CIP funding.

RATIONALE: A coordinated body is more effective and provides a central location for Native nations to share experiences and best practices with navigating CIP and utility programs.

4 **Develop a funding mechanism that supports an autonomous and coordinated approach for Native nations to invest in energy conservation projects.**

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a pilot program for two to three Native nations in Minnesota to outline a process and demonstrate how they can administer and direct their own energy efficiency investments.

RATIONALE: The current system is leaving energy savings opportunities on the table. This new approach will address the disconnect that Native nations feel between their energy, climate, and resiliency goals. It will also create pathways to work with utilities through CIP to achieve those goals.

For More Information

Contact Jeannette LeZaks at **jlezaks@slipstreaminc.org**

Full report of research

This project was supported by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources, through the Conservation Applied Research and Development (CARD) program, which is funded by Minnesota ratepayers.