TRIBAL NATIONS TOOLBOX TOURS

MENOMINEE SUMMARY

2700 Mianaceqtawak Rd Keshena, WI
4/29/2025

AGENDA

12:30pm - Lunch

1:30pm - Check-in

2:00pm - Tribal Economic Development Ecosystems

3:00pm - Activating Entrepreneurial Support Systems

4:00pm - Identifying Actional Items that Produce Results

5:00pm - Close

OPENING STATEMENTS

The Tribal Toolbox event began with Menominee Nation hosting a lunch followed by Opening comments and welcome by Menominee Nation. Kevin Chesnik, AICCW, provided an overview of the Tribal Toolbox and began introductions.

WEDC shared several programs they are responsible for including an upcoming grant program, events providing tribal technical assistance, and economic development planning. The TANIF Program was mentioned, and general economic development assistance was discussed. WHEDA talked about their funding and mortgage programs including the importance of Bay Bank as a tribal lending resource.

Kevin continued the discussion going over the purpose, connections and information the Tribal Toolbox events can provide. A key aspect includes follow up with a leave behind of each event that the tribes can utilize for connections and contact information. We all need to be on the same page to emphasize what expectations can be carried over to next year's Tribal Toolbox Tour. We want to make a difference and showcase successes for tribal businesses and tribal economic development. AICCW helps tribal businesses maintain economic success through supporting their 70+ members, all 11 tribal nations and advocating for tribal business throughout the state. This advocacy includes things like providing the federal government the impacts in Indian Country that policies tike tariffs have on tribal nations.

TOPICS DISCUSSED

TRIBAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Sharon Waukau mentioned receiving a grant and looking to create an economic development ecosystem to utilize such funds. They have pieces in place but not the structure. They would like to do something with EDA investments. She is concerned that money is going off reservation and mentioned the potential loss of some $312 million of economic investment. Menominee would like more access to capital and concerned that their system is not a fully functional system. Who can they turn to for networking and support?

Others talked about needing new businesses, however land in trust makes it very difficult to develop tribal land to create new businesses. There are significant roadblocks that any one piece that breaks down impacts the rest of the development. There are significant roadblocks to developing native land. David Flemming of WEDC talked on how long it takes to get things in place – a long time. There is a need to keep discussion going to move things forward.

Chris Caldwell of Menominee College talked about expanding relationships outside of tribal boarders. Is tribal economic development different from other tribal development? What can CMN do to bring more opportunities and become an entrepreneur center of learning.

Crystal Chevalier of Wolf River Development Company provided an overview of the WRDC. It includes 16 businesses and an office building for staff. There are workforce development and entrepreneur development ideas going on and they provide resources offering connections.

Kevin Chesnik indicated that the AICCW can offer resources to do training for Wolf River Development Company. He mentioned examples that included the Urban League HUB in Madison and Potawatomi Wgema Campus in Milwaukee.

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Menominee Members are leaving the reservation. How can we make community opportunities that people want to stay for and be a part of.

Fern Orie of WIHEDC mentioned FACC and talked about their issues in setting up a business hub on each reservation. Working with MNC to bring in teams to do various types of training and assistance
What uses could the HUB be used for. What start up work is available and SBDC asked the question about what would be needed in training. Response included very small business needs – some do not recognize that they are a business – Provide small grants based on small business progress thru milestones including the very beginning stage by offering services.

SM discussed competitive entrepreneurship grants and the importance of partnership in grant submission. He also discussed longer term industrial type part planning on tribal land where some funding is available. He outlined a build it and they will come strategy. The biggest challenge involves the infrastructure.

MNC partnering with MTE – forest product industry. College expanding to include workforce development. CEDS plan strategy.

The money is available if the group can find it. There needs to be a strategy /plan which is the HARDEST ONE TO DEAL WITH. Need time for preparation as you lose out to those more prepared.

Talked about developing grant strength – partnerships and getting more of these submitted. Unique opportunities for tribal communities. Not all opportunities fit all tribes. Sharon indicated the need to develop partnerships.

Many participants did not realize how much different that Menominee is vs other tribes.





HOUSING

Having opportunity – trust law is complex.

Tax credit – has complex compliance requirements.

Seyoum Mengesha suggested going to real estate developers in other parts of the state. Menominee Nation did a real estate study and partnered with established RE developer, but financials were not being met.

A Policy of chasing money is short sighted. It is out of reach and may not fit.
There are Limitations in agencies, and they may not be able to help us.

Change the ask: what do you need and then request the funds. Do not ask: Here is the program how do we fit. It is challenging to overcome the barriers, and each opportunity needs to fit the tribe's needs.

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Office of energy talked about tribal inputs into their programs. They launched a Wisconsin climate navigators' program. Example is in Red Cliff - Bayfield.

David WEDC office of energy is relevant and useful.

Match requirements – be creative – find partnership – include support letters

Fern Orie: WI Native Homeowner coalition with statewide focus to do a study of the gap analysis – understand each tribe's position and how to make housing affordable. WHEDA has quarterly housing meetings that have specific tunnel vision but are they are trying to expand their vision.

ENTREPRENEUR

Entrepreneur support systems – Sharon indicated the need to access resources.

Menominee members have difficulty in locating resources for small startup businesses. Kevin talked about lending opportunities from the Native CDFIs including FACC which can provide technical assistance to entrepreneurs.

Noon Sky Productions has used Legal zoom selling where he could. He is self-motivated and Kevin indicated that AICCW looks to find like-minded members. There are technical barriers which the current ARPA grant the Chamber is administering could provide help with. We are here to listen to what is needed.

SBDC shared what they do. The goal is not to fail. Do not incur debt prior to developing a plan and discussed early development.

CMC had previous mini grants – stereotypes of native business.

Seyoum Mengesha talked about CMN to team with other educational institutions for financial literacy.

Sharon mentioned that bringing things to life comes from people connecting.

ACTION ITEMS - BRINGING VALUE TO THE TRIBE

AICCW American Indian Chamber of Commerce - Wisconsin. Building Wealth In Indian Country	Sharon will be the point person for Menominee and Kevin (AICCW) will coordination actions for the Toolbox Tour team. Kevin will connect with Gary Dodge of Noon Sky Productions. Kevin will meet with Crystal Chevalier of Wolf River Development Company.
WISCONSIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	WEDC to send Sharon how to map ecosystems information. WEDC will share a checklist on what is done when a new person calls for assistance
SBDC Small Business Development Center	SBDC to work together on event and individual meetings for Economic Development support.
WIHEDC	Fern Orie will provide more analysis and information with an emphasis on– continuation, capacity and working together.
WHEDA	Erica Steele indicated that State consultation and WHEDA consultation is coming up in June with a December Summit. Will continue conversations.
WISCONSIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	David Flemming indicated programs may not always be a fit – entrepreneur grant coming – Will share and update website with possible modifications to opportunities to meet limitations of the tribe.

ACTION ITEMS - BRINGING VALUE TO THE TRIBE (continued)

	Wisconsin Climate action program information and office contact information.
	Small Business Academy push.
	GW will pass on contact information.
	Gary Dodge of Noon Sky Productions will attend more events.

ATTENDING RESOURCE AGENCIES

ATTENDEES

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ATTENDEES (continued)

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