

TRIBAL NATIONS TOOLBOX TOURS

BAD RIVER BAND

73370 US HWY 2 Odanah, WI

10/7/2025



AGENDA

8:30am - Welcome & Introductions

9:00am - Fiber Broadband

9:45am - Energy Sovereignty

10:30am - Youth Training and
Workforce

11:30am - Close

OPENING STATEMENTS

The BAD RIVER SESSION of TRIBAL TOOLBOX TOURS was held on OCTOBER 7 2025. Philomena Kebec provided the Bad River welcome to the group and provided a tribal presentation to introduce the participants to the history of the Bad River Ojibwe tribe. She indicated that it is very important to understand context of the history of the Bad River tribe. Bad River has an approximate workforce of 500 and covers 125K acres. 1800 tribal members live on the reservation with a total of 3500 in surrounding areas. The largest tribal employer is the clinic which is working on a new strategic plan.

Bad River's economy is based on the casino operation which now 40 years old, the Superior Connections [internet high speed, essential – revenue producer], the BR Health and Wellness Clinic which had a recent \$33 mill expansion to include a fitness center – which can be a potential revenue and job enterprise serving all of Ashland County. Bad River community has experienced tribal staff, broadband, roads, water / sewer, treaty rights, "complex transactions", revenue-generating initiatives, and environmental protections.

TOPICS DISCUSSED

FIBER BROADBAND

Bad River needs help in their accounting department, business leases, businesses in tribal housing, and dedicated BD resources. There is limited engagement with members living off the reservation and their business enterprises need technical business assistance.

Kevin Chesnik, Executive Director of AICCW, provided an overview of the tribal toolbox tour expectations and introduced AICCW with its mission and vision to create and support tribally owned and native owned businesses. The AICCW has been implementing ARPA grant awards to our members and other tribal businesses which is expected to total over \$1million dollars. The Resource Providers provided their introductions including FACC, WPI, PSC, WHEDA, WHEDIC and WEDA.

From PSC — Bad River has 61 locations qualifying for broadband. A portion of the PSC funding is being allocated for upgrades. There is data to share with non-deployed monies waiting to be released. Everyone is encouraged to support this effort through various outreach initiatives. Bad River originally partnered with tech colleges to make this happen.

The project is now in phase 2 expansion and Bad River wants to begin the build out.

NTIA has \$150K to spend focusing on a strong backbone buildout but had to put the work on hold.

The projects BACKBONE – the MIDDLE MILE – has right of way issues and will take another year. Bad River asked PSC for extension and started construction on October 6, 2025.

Need more fiber to be built out in phase 2 to support new available tribal housing which needs service.

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PSC permission granted COVID funds use and gave permission on past receivables.

An Issue to solve; rectifiers are not at efficient level with some reliance on outside support to triage and repair. This is a concern that needs to be addressed.

Microsoft bills, accounting system.

Previous ARPA funds should have been spent BUT are now just starting to be drawn down.

There are Contractor issues to deal with during phase 2.

WEDC comment; They have some capacity grants open on their website. Please check with the regional WEDC director. Ruralwisconsin.org has toolkits, increase activity, a feasibility report, high turnover and offline meeting on particulars.

Technical assistance is needed for the tribal workforce. Bad River's current trainer is LIGHTBRIGADE. They have had problems with them and would be interested in hosting alternate training options.

Recommend that a DWD contact for training be contacted.

KC will look to tailor training for BAD RIVER and other tribes. He mentioned the tribal business certificate opportunity with Stevens Point.

A Tribal broadband BOOT CAMP could not be scheduled.

Philomena – Discussions between Superior Connections vs Tribal Government on some things like Microsoft and similar options. Superior Connections could become independent with a business development corporation set up and formal separation with the tribe. Financials would be the responsibilities between tribe and Superior Connections.

Bad River is looking for funding of the PLANNING PIECE – and is looking to find the agency that has this resource.

WEDC funding grant now open for the session starting on Oct 14 – Red Cliff received one as did Sawyer County LCO and IGNITE WISCONSIN which supports business development and brings colleges and others to encourage business development on the reservations. Fern's WIHEDC conference will talk to finding capital Nov 5-6 at a tribal leader and entrepreneur event.

ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY

Energy Funding – If you want to use this funding for casino SSBCI it cannot be used in gaming portion BUT can be used on other parts of the building.

Bad River did a cost share on microgrids – They own 1% the other owner of 99% is FAITHNTECH.

Bad River is Working with Enron on strategy plan.

Bad River Solar project projected at \$6 mill with stacking potential.

Bad River did a Minigrid \$18.6 million grid of which \$14 mill DOE and remainder ITC reimbursement – need \$6.2 mill to complete. / have installed 3 micro grids / flooding impact – washouts – maybe largest microgrid in the state.

CDFI offering further conversations – getting close - want to keep in place. This will NEED MATCHING FUNDS.

PSC will look at what they have – not open now but could be later.

KC – federal funding is currently facing issues. When writing for these grants prioritize your energy issue with careful use of wording to describe renewable sources. Focus on the home/consumer vs business needs.

Bayfield Electric is currently being used.

YOUTH TRAINING AND WORKFORCE

Annual AICCW scholarships – taking applications to Nov 1 for 2026 college students.

AICCW – training opportunities for tribes to tailored courses meeting their needs.

AICCW – DOA has a program with the high schools – schools provide business students for jobs with area businesses. ONEIDA high school and LDF high school are part of this program.

Housing space – WHEDA supports individuals going into housing development via the WHEDA Developer's Course, a three-day training exploring key components of housing development. An example of success from this training is Collin Price, Ho-Chunk member and developer. Post-training, Collin successfully applied and was awarded housing tax credits to develop Ho-Chunk Nation's first-ever Housing Tax Credit project. These credits are a critical resource for affordable housing development. There are other housing industry needs as well such as property management that could be explored for future skill development opportunities

KC – WisDOT looking for a workforce to support highway project work in northern Wisconsin. Training to support roadway industry is available through on the job training on each project. This is a real opportunity.

David CDFI indicates that there is a labor shortage for road work. WIHEDC is a housing coalition in WI that is looking at the whole industry. Skills training is necessary, and all partners need to work together. WIHEDC is working with DOA to establish business HUBs at all 11 tribes utilizing partnerships/grants vs physical locations. BR has SB program and on "list" for next year. - USIC is current provider – Superior Connections had to pay mover responsibility within the tribe both existing and new. Training is available. PSC is doing something with locates through the Gov Taskforce.

Philomena – Tero account funding available \$200K and could be possibly drawn for specific needs but would require a plan. Workforce training needs a potential application.

Kevin Chesnik, Executive Director AICCW provided the Wrap up and next steps to include sharing the minutes of the meeting.

ATTENDING RESOURCE AGENCIES



ATTENDEES

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