

# The BRIDGES Project

Bringing Resources and Innovative Developments to Gain Employment Skills

A collaborative effort funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to bring workforce training to Native America using mobile wireless technology and training.

The mission of the BRIDGES project is to enhance educational and employment opportunities for Native Americans through the use of advanced state-of-the-art technology. For many Native Americans residing in rural areas, large distances and lack of transportation impede access to training and services, and consequently, opportunities to participate in the local workforce.

Through a grant from the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, the Comanche Nation College of Lawton, Oklahoma and EarthWalk Communications, Inc. of Manassas, Virginia are working in partnership to bring critical workforce skill training and services directly to those who are facing these barriers. This partnership encompasses both the direction and administration provided by the Comanche Nation College and the technology and training provided by EarthWalk. The implementation of EarthWalk's versatile mobile technology to provide workforce skill training is preparing participating tribal members to obtain gainful employment while simultaneously increasing the number of individuals able to take advantage of computer technology to learn critical skills.



Above: Students in Comanche Nation College's Practical Nursing/LPN Program use EarthWalk ruggedized wireless laptops and mobile wireless labs for training and testing.

The participating Native American Tribes are:



Comanche Nation



Navajo Nation



Washoe Tribe of Nevada & California



Three Affiliated Tribe (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nation)



Rosebud Sioux Tribe

(over)



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## A MOBILE WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION for TRAINING

The mobility offered by the EarthWalk hardware is essential to meet the challenges afforded by the dispersed nature of these participating Native American communities. EarthWalk has distributed 605 eBuddy ruggedized laptops housed in its NetWize SmartCarts and eXpress Cases to each participating tribe to use in delivering technology based adult basic education instruction and workforce skill training to hundreds of trainees.

Trademark qualities of this mobile wireless computer lab system include built-in power management and recharging capabilities that enable the laptops to be used throughout an entire day, without interruption. The NetWize System provides enough power to simultaneously recharge all of the EarthWalk eBuddy ruggedized wireless laptops, additional batteries and peripherals housed in a SmartCart or eXpress Case from just one standard electrical outlet. This efficiency and mobility eliminates the need for additional infrastructure or electrical wiring.

For participants in the BRIDGES Project, the flexibility of EarthWalk's mobile system enables them to teach and learn valuable skills in any location and greatly expand accessibility to technology and training.

Within each tribe, participating trainers are using their EarthWalk mobile wireless labs to reach a wide audience including: college students seeking certification and licensing in fields such as healthcare, security and teaching; detention center inmates receiving GED and basic job skill instruction; TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients seeking to obtain GED instruction and adult basic education; and members of vocational rehabilitation centers obtaining workforce skill training, GED preparation and adult basic education. With the portability offered by the mobile labs, trainers are able to provide instruction in multiple locations and reach a much larger population. EarthWalk's mobile wireless labs enable training to come directly to those who otherwise might not have access to or even know about more centrally located training centers.

Local industries in each of the participating tribal communities – from hospitality and healthcare to construction and information technology – are in need of a higher educated workforce and have assured new hire opportunities for tribal members upon completion of training.

Comanche Nation College and EarthWalk are working together to ensure the successful increase in employment skills and job placement as well as potential for expansion of this project following the close of the pilot period in June 2007.



[Bridges Website](#)



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