

For Immediate Release

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To the Rescue: Consolidated Construction Co., Inc. Teams with HKG Architects to Design, Build COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Facility for Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate (SWO) Tribe in South Dakota

Dedication ceremony held today for completed first phase on Lake Traverse Reservation.

APPLETON, Wis. (February 23, 2021) – No stranger to planning, designing and building projects for Native American tribes in different parts of the country, [Consolidated Construction Co., Inc.](#) is in the midst of a unique, life-changing building project for a tribe in South Dakota during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consolidated Construction — a full-service design/build firm based in Appleton, Wisconsin, with offices also in the Dakotas — partnered with HKG Architects of Aberdeen, South Dakota, to create a multi-purpose housing and behavioral health treatment facility for the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate (SWO) tribe.

Today, the SWO, along with project officials from Consolidated Construction and HKG Architects, held a ribbon cutting, blessing, and dedication ceremony for the completed first phase of the COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Facility on the Lake Traverse Reservation in northeastern South Dakota.

This extensive project — which also includes a food pantry and an early childhood learning center that will be completed this spring — came in response to an urgent need the tribe had to care for and protect its tribal members impacted by COVID-19.

“COVID-19 affects the food, the children, the health and well-being of all our people,” said Matt Thompson, SWO Economic Development and Planning Director. “That’s why we initially sought out proactive solutions for quarantine and isolation, to slow the spread of the virus. It’s why we chose to pursue an early childhood learning center and food pantry facilities, to educate our young people and get food into the hands and mouths of those who need it most.”

While the COVID-19 outbreak has reshaped the lives of every American in the last year, indigenous peoples have been more negatively impacted than any other ethnic or racial group. Tribal members make up only 9% of South Dakota’s population, yet they represent 14% of all COVID-19 cases and 15% of all deaths in the state, according to data from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. For many SWO members, the situation is compounded due to underlying health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, asthma, obesity, and substance and alcohol abuse.

The SWO, a band of the Santee Sioux who relocated from Minnesota to the Lake Traverse Reservation after the infamous Dakota Uprising of 1862, has 15,000 members. Many of them reside in multi-generational housing, making it difficult to insulate older members from exposure to the coronavirus, especially when stay-at-home orders during the pandemic exacerbated those underlying health conditions.

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The pandemic also had a great effect on the well-being of tribal members when it forced the temporary closure of three casinos on the reservation, shuttering the tribe's largest employers. Suddenly, their most critical revenue stream had gone dry, and everyone in the community was impacted on some level.

Recognizing the need to invest in the physical and mental health of their members, the SWO Tribal Council decided to take the fight to COVID-19 by constructing a housing project for those suffering the effects of the virus. As the situation grew more dire, that plan morphed into the more comprehensive 16-unit COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Facility in Sisseton.

The tribe applied for and received aid from the federal government through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, commonly known as CARES. The bill, enacted in March 2020, made a pool of money available to state, local and tribal governments seeking to mitigate the impact of the outbreak.

There was, however, one caveat: All related construction expenses had to be incurred by Dec. 30, 2020, to be eligible for CARES reimbursement. That made speed-to-completion of utmost concern. Thompson knew that posed a challenge for the tribe, given the economic downturn at a time when the tribe's workforce had shifted greatly from the building trade professions to the casino industry in recent years.

"We didn't know how to take the first step. It's tough when there's no process to follow," Thompson noted. "As a whole, we lack technical expertise. We do things in a very old-school way. We had to find a trustworthy construction partner, one that could fill in the gaps and turn our vision into reality."

But where to look?

With A Little Help from Some Friends — New and Old

Enter the teams of Consolidated Construction and HKG Architects. HKG has a longstanding relationship with SWO, while Consolidated Construction had experience working on tribal projects in the region. The teams heard about the challenges SWO faced and reached out to lend their expertise.

After discussions with the tribe, Consolidated Construction and HKG crafted a manageable development strategy by splitting the project into multiple phases. Consolidated Construction also proposed a partnership to not only assist with building the COVID-19 facility, but also put in place teaching and training opportunities for SWO members interested in pursuing careers in the construction industry.

"Our collaborative goal is to empower the members in their own personal and tribal success stories," said Jim Perras, the principal in charge of the Consolidated Construction team. "We worked directly with their Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) to put a process in place to provide training and get members exposure to potential careers in the construction industry."

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“What really set Consolidated Construction apart is they took a genuine interest in helping us improve the health of our community,” Thompson said. “From an execution standpoint, they provide an entire suite of services that reduce a lot of the risk for the tribe. We don’t have a construction outfit. We also don’t have the capacity to pre-develop plans, or do architecture. Consolidated brought the whole package, and their teaming up with HKG Architects clicked right from the start.”

To meet the requirements of the CARES Act funding by the end of 2020, Consolidated Construction and HKG Architects fast-tracked the project schedule by sequencing design to support the construction process that started in August. And the SWO tribe made timely decisions, allowing construction to continue. Its TERO office also came through with manpower and skilled labor training to offset the lack of subcontractor availability in some trades.

Phase 1 of the COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Facility was completed on time and on budget before the Dec. 30 CARES Act deadline. The facility has 17,000 square feet of space for testing, a commercial kitchen, offices, a commons, a nurse’s station, and 16 living units with full kitchens, living areas, bathrooms, laundry facilities, and bedrooms for COVID-19 patients.

In progress for completion this spring is Phase 2, with a second wing of 22 micro apartment rooms added to the COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Facility. That area of the building will be used to house short-term COVID-19 patients. Once the virus is under control, it will evolve to a behavioral health treatment and housing facility focusing on drug and alcohol addiction and abuse treatment. The program will be administered by Dakota Pride, a tribal-run organization that hopes to implement a nine- to 12-month recovery program for methamphetamine addiction.

There are also plans for a third phase of the project, which will incorporate behavioral health day treatment and educational classrooms.

As the quarantine facility project was getting started, SWO decided to invest CARES Act funds into additional construction projects for the benefit of the community. An early childhood learning center and food pantry were added to the to-do list. Both facilities are in Agency Village, about 8 miles south of Sisseton, and fill gaping needs created by the COVID-19 crisis.

The food pantry, relocated from an abandoned post office building, opened in January with a larger footprint to meet the increased demand for food amid the pandemic. The tribe’s spacious early childhood care center is scheduled to be ready in early spring. It will accommodate up to 100 children daily and have state-of-the-art air filtering and decontamination processes.

“It’s unbelievable what Consolidated Construction has been able to accomplish,” said Jesse Larson, an SWO specialist who coordinates activities between the tribe, project manager, architect, and construction firm. He also is chairman of one of seven SWO districts.

“Our leadership took the bold step to get the funding to improve our living conditions,” Larson added. “Thanks to HKG Architects and the quick actions of Consolidated Construction and their crews, we will be able to accomplish and complete all these projects in six to nine months. Incredible!”

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This rendering shows the COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Facility (on left) that was built in late 2020 and an additional second wing with micro apartment rooms (on right) being constructed now to house short-term COVID-19 patients for the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate (SWO) tribe on the Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota.

About Consolidated Construction

Consolidated Construction Co., Inc. consolidates financing assistance, architecture and construction into a single source to provide streamlined building services to commercial, hospitality, industrial and food industry clients throughout the country. Company headquarters are located in Appleton, Wisconsin, with additional offices in Rapid City, South Dakota, and Bismarck, North Dakota. The company's delivery model has resulted in national awards for design/build ingenuity and cost reduction. Project information and company history can be viewed at www.1call2build.com.

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Attachments from Consolidated Construction Co., Inc.:

Photo of ribbon cutting outside the SWO's COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Facility on the Lake Traverse Reservation in Sisseton, South Dakota, on Tuesday afternoon, Feb. 23, 2021.

Rendering of SWO's COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Facility on the Lake Traverse Reservation in Sisseton, South Dakota, with additional second wing with micro apartments.

Rendering of SWO's new early childhood learning center in Agency Village, South Dakota.

Rendering of SWO's new food pantry in Agency Village, South Dakota.