

# U.S. Nonprofits Join Forces to Support a Vulnerable Native American Community in Southeastern Montana

*Empowered by Light and Indigenized Energy Initiative recently installed solar and energy storage on a Northern Cheyenne community center.*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, May 25, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The multi-use community center in the Muddy district on the Northern Cheyenne reservation has received solar power and energy storage thanks to U.S.-based nonprofits, [Empowered by Light](#) (EBL) and [Indigenized Energy Initiative](#) (IEI), formerly Covenant Tribal Solar Initiative, with support from the Kahrl Family and donated solar modules from the Footprint Project.



Solar array for Northern Cheyenne

The two organizations have installed a 10-kilowatt photovoltaic solar energy system along with 19 kilowatt hours of energy storage on Muddy Hall which is used for community events, informal gatherings and serves as a place for emergency shelter and assistance. In addition to offsetting the community's electricity bills, the solar energy system with backup energy storage ensures Muddy Hall and its adjoining fire station have a reliable supply of power to serve the community and enable the two fire trucks to be deployed when needed.

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*Kyle Alderman, Renewable Energy Manager for the Northern Cheyenne Tribe*

The Cheyenne crew consisted of 11 Tribal Members, who received five days of hands-on solar energy training focused on calculating power loads, basic system design,

solar safety, racking and module installation and energy management.

“This project represents the first tribally-led solar project for the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and is the first on our path to energy sovereignty,” said Kyle Alderman, Renewable Energy Manager for the Tribe. This project, the first official project of the Northern Cheyenne Office of Renewable Energy and the Tribe, follows a series of demonstration projects IEI has completed on the Reservation, including a 100kW system on the roof of the Little Wolf Capitol Building.



Northern Cheyenne installing solar

The Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, located in southeastern Montana, is approximately 690 square miles in size and home to approximately 5,000 Cheyenne people. Approximately one in three American Indians lives in poverty, and 14 percent of Native households have no access to electricity. The Northern Cheyenne Tribe has faced discriminatory pricing from utility companies for decades—often paying two times the national average. It’s estimated that the ground-mounted solar energy system utilizing SimpliPhi Power batteries will provide over \$5,000 in annual savings on the Muddy community building’s electricity bills.



Solar array built by Native Americans

“This solar and storage system provides stability, essential resources, and increases the value of the community center to the Muddy community,” said IEI executive director, Otto Braided Hair. “Most importantly, it was built by Cheyenne people, for Cheyenne people, and serves as inspiration for tribal members to pursue careers in renewable energy.”

“Not only will this project reduce energy costs and increase energy security and resiliency for the community, but it serves as a great example of the energy independence the Northern Cheyenne and other tribes can ultimately achieve,” said Moira Hanes, EBL executive director and co-founder.

## About Empowered by Light

Empowered by Light is a U.S. 501(c)3 nonprofit empowering vulnerable communities on the frontlines of climate change, wildlife loss and environmental devastation. EBL has completed more than 50 solar and energy storage projects in nine countries--including eight in Sub-Saharan Africa, 21 in Puerto Rico, 14 in the Amazon and four for Native American communities in the U.S. EBL's projects are helping school-age children study better, supporting conservation and wildlife protection efforts, and building more resilient communities. Visit [www.empoweredbylight.org](http://www.empoweredbylight.org) to learn more.

## About Indigenized Energy Initiative (IEI)

Indigenized Energy Initiative (IEI) is a Native-led non-profit that empowers Native American tribes to pursue a self-determined path towards energy independence and sovereignty. Formed in response to the inspiring leadership of Native communities in resisting fossil fuel development and in pursuit of clean regenerative energy systems, IEI is supporting a growing number of tribes in the development of long-term energy plans and projects that will maximize economic impact through job creation, energy savings, and resiliency. Building trust with tribes is a vital aspect of IEI's approach. With a deep respect for the wisdom and values held by Native communities, IEI works side by side with tribes on their path to energy independence. Led by a diverse team of Native change-makers and energy leaders that draw from decades of experience in energy, education and workforce development, IEI receives support from a growing list of partners including John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and founding donors, the Pazala Foundation. IEI is a project of Earth Island Institute. Visit [www.indigenized.energy](http://www.indigenized.energy) to learn more.

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