

Sovereignty, Strategy, and Stewardship: Building Outdoor Recreation Economies on Tribal Lands

A Case Study from the Wind River Indian Reservation

Alexandra Calloway-Nation, Economic Recovery Corps Fellow





Why This Work Matters

1

Wind River Indian Reservation:
2.2 million acres, home to Eastern
Shoshone and Northern Arapaho
Tribes

2

Rich natural, cultural, and
recreational assets

3

BUT: persistent underinvestment
and barriers to accessing capital

4

*We asked a simple question: What
would it look like if the outdoor
economy actually served Native
communities first?*



The Vision: Launching a Strategic Plan

Goals:

- Diversify the economy beyond government and energy
- Center tribal values in land use
- Build sustainable, tribally-owned recreation infrastructure

Guiding Pillars:

- **Sovereignty** – ensuring all development aligns with tribal governance and values.
- **Sustainability** – economically, environmentally, and culturally.
- **Opportunity** – creating pathways for tribal entrepreneurs, youth employment, and community wealth.





What We've Learned

1

Outdoor rec as sovereign economic development

2

Barriers to access = barriers to prosperity

3

Demand is there: anglers, hunters, campers, and cultural tourists are eager to engage—ethically

4

Policy matters: We're pursuing a tribal resolution to expand hunting access to non-tribal members—a game changer for revenue.



What We're Building

- **Tribal permitting system** that is online-accessible for non-member recreation
- **Marketing ecosystem** to reposition Wind River as a destination
- **Capacity-building** through youth workforce development and community ownership





What We've Accomplished

1

\$4.43 million in Wyoming
Outdoor Recreation Grant
funding awards across 7 projects

3

\$3 million in funding from the
MacKenzie Scott Foundation

2

\$36 million in EDA Recompete
Grant funding awards across
9 projects


4

EDA Economic Recovery Corps
Fellow (me!)



Takeaways

- Tribal lands = massive untapped outdoor rec markets
- Authentic, sustainable tourism requires tribal leadership
- Economic development is about self-determination, not extraction



If you want to support tribal outdoor rec economies—start by listening.



Closing Thoughts

- Let's rethink how outdoor recreation can be a tool for Native prosperity
- Partner with tribes early—and on their terms
- Support policy shifts that expand tribal control over land, licensing, and visitation



Thank you.

With gratitude to the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes, and all those working toward Native economic sovereignty through stewardship.

Connect with me on LinkedIn or at alexandra@cnconsultingllc.com

