

Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma uses GAP to develop brownfields program



Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma

Project Time Period (FY2016– FY2028)

- **Tribal Contact:** Darren Shields, Environmental Director
- **GAP Project Officer:** Curtis Hicks, EPA Region 6
- **Media:** Solid Waste, CERCLA, EPCRA, and Brownfields
- **GAP Funded Results:**
 - ETEP Development/Implementation
 - Outreach & Education
 - Program Development (Core Competencies)
 - Training

McLoud, Oklahoma

Project Description

In FY2016, the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma added a new component to their GAP work plan: assessment and remediation of contaminated sites. Specific tasks under this component included staff training and completing a site inventory. Training was completed in several program areas including remediation and emergency response. Training and completion of site inventories increased program capacity and prepared the Kickapoo Department of Environmental Programs (KDEP) to implement an effective brownfields program.

Project Details

The KDEP applied for and received a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) Section 128(a) Tribal Response Program grant in FY2015. This funding, along with continued support from GAP, enabled the department to obtain further training and to begin the development of the four elements of a response program (1 - Develop a site inventory on tribal lands, 2 - Strengthen the tribe's capacity to respond to contaminated sites, 3 - Foster public participation through outreach and education, 4 - Develop cleanup standards). Site inventories continued to be a task under the tribe's GAP work plan. The tribe fulfilled this task by completing open dump assessments.

In August 2014, the Inter-Tribal Environmental Council (ITEC) completed a

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment of the tribe's gymnasium and a Phase II in May 2015. The assessments revealed the presence of asbestos and mold. In December 2016, the KDEP applied for a CERCLA 104(k) brownfields cleanup grant to address the environmental contaminants in the gymnasium. This cleanup project began in October 2017 and is scheduled for completion in September 2020.

With support from GAP and Section 128(a), the KDEP hired a contractor to help prepare the brownfield cleanup proposal for the gymnasium. The tribe utilized Kansas State University's Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) software to prepare the proposal. Prior to submission to EPA, TAB technical reviewers read the proposal and offered feedback. Throughout the process, KDEP staff attended workshops hosted by EPA Region 6 and TAB.

Community Response

The gymnasium is an important cultural site for the Kickapoo Tribe. From 1960-2010, the gymnasium was used for community meals, dances, a recreation area, and a place to participate in traditional activities. The gymnasium was also the first building constructed on tribal trust land, and many elders have fond memories of events and activities that took place there.



Map of Tribal Boundaries

Kickapoo tribal lands are located in far eastern Oklahoma County, southern Lincoln County, and northern Pottawatomie County. The tribe possesses 6,213 acres of restricted land, of which 1,045 acres are held in trust. There are approximately 2,696 enrolled Kickapoo tribal members, with approximately 1,958 Kickapoo tribal members living in Oklahoma.

In 2010, the gymnasium was closed because drinking water samples indicated the presence of lead. The building also sustained substantial damage from a leaking roof.

Community participation is an integral part of the brownfields program. Because the gymnasium is an important cultural site for the Kickapoo Tribe, the tribal community has been engaged and involved during the planning process. On November 2016, the KDEP hosted a community meeting to discuss the project.

During the meeting, tribal members shared memories of the gym, debated alternatives, and explored possibilities for future use of the site. Several alternatives were considered, ranging from no action to full demolition of the existing building and construction of a new building. As the project evolves, the community will continue to guide decision-making.

Developing a successful brownfields program is complex. Community need, community acceptance, long-term sustainability, energy and resource conservation, timeframes to achieve the desired outcomes, economic development and job creation, long-term benefits for the community and cost are all factors that should be considered in a brownfields project. The active involvement of the tribal community is essential to the implementation of a successful project.

Innovation

This project has been unique for the Kickapoo Tribe because the tribal community has a long-standing connection to the gymnasium. The project addresses a need identified by the tribe and integrates components of cultural sustainability, environmental protection and the protection of human health.

Next Steps

The Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma plans to redevelop the site. Redevelopment will include a building that provides an area for cultural gatherings and youth events, while also honoring the historical significance of the property. The community envisions renovating the site to create a modern Kickapoo Tribal Heritage Center. Site renovation will necessitate asbestos abatement and mold removal, but efforts will be made to preserve portions of the structure for reuse in the new building.

For additional information, please visit the [Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma](#).

