



INDIAN COUNTRY SNAPSHOT:

Red Lake Nation

A leader in the tribal self-determination movement, RLN established its own workforce development programs in the mid-1970s.¹ However, for the next 25 years, these programs remained largely disconnected from one another due to their different federal and state funding sources; they also struggled to holistically address RLN members' distinct workforce development needs or fully align with their cultural values and lifeways. In response, in 2000 RLN launched Oshkiimaajitahdah ("A New Path"), a consolidated approach that educates families "to discover their strengths as individuals"² by "breaking down the barriers" that stand in the way of self-sufficiency.³ Under Oshkiimaajitahdah's umbrella are 22 programs – six within RLN's 477 Plan and the other 16 seamlessly run as side-by-side programs.⁴ A "true one-stop,"⁵ Oshkiimaajitahdah provides "fully integrated" workforce development and related services "at all stages" through a single, centrally located facility "where community members who are unemployed or underemployed can prepare for work."⁶ These services are coordinated through weekly meetings of all connected programmatic leaders and Oshkiimaajitahdah's universal TribeVue case management system, which enables all staff to update and track each client's progress in real time. Oshkiimaajitahdah heavily emphasizes facilitating "the growth of business, investment and jobs," which receives "the highest priority for the use of all available employment and training resources."⁷ Its streamlined approach flexibly channels resources into solutions tailored to community needs, such as the hiring of a career development specialist who connects clients with area off-reservation employers and teaches them how to start their own businesses.⁸ It also has launched targeted trainings in auto repair through its full-service auto shop (where clients learn the trade servicing tribal vehicles) and food production through food producer trainings and its Ashangewin Catering (where clients learn about food-based businesses).⁹ Oshkiimaajitahdah recently expanded TANF to a four-county service area surrounding RLN.¹⁰

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[Red Lake Nation Oshkiimaajitahdah](#)

[Oshkiimaajitahdah \(video\)](#)

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¹ Red Lake Nation (RLN), *Red Lake Nation P.L. 102-477 Employment and Training Division Manual: January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2026*, March 25, 2024, p. 10.

² RLN, “About Oshkiimaajitahdah” webpage (<https://oshkiimaajitahdah.com/pages/about-us-2.html>, accessed December 30, 2024).

³ Eugene Standingcloud, Interim Co-Executive Director, Oshkiimaajitahdah, Red Lake Nation, Conversation with NCAI, July 24, 2024. As the Oshkiimaajitahdah website explains, “We are a tribal program that promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals and community with funding, strategic partnerships, guidance, training and technical assistance” (RLN, “About Oshkiimaajitahdah” webpage). Translated from Anishinaabe, “Oshkiimaajitahdah” means “new path” or “new journey” (RLN, “Oshkiimaajitahdah” webpage (<https://oshkiimaajitahdah.com/>, accessed December 30, 2024)).

⁴ The six programs featured in RLN’s 477 Plan are CCDF, GA, Higher Education, JPT, NEW, and WIOA. The programs Oshkiimaajitahdah administers in tandem with its 477-based programs include TANF, TERO, SNAP, Community Action Program, Child Support Enforcement, Red Lake Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Ganawenindiwig Cultural Program (for a complete list, see: <https://oshkiimaajitahdah.com/pages/about-us-2.html>).

⁵ Tracey Kingbird, Interim Co-Executive Director, Oshkiimaajitahdah, Red Lake Nation, Conversation with NCAI, July 24, 2024.

⁶ Ibid., RLN, *Red Lake Nation P.L. 102-477 Employment and Training Division Manual*, March 25, 2024, pp. 11-12.

⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 3 and 20.

⁹ Oshkiimaajitahdah’s full-service auto shop also offers classes to community members on basic auto maintenance so they don’t have to travel off-reservation to pay for it. Meanwhile, the Ashangewin Catering program generates revenue through catered events at RLN’s Giminjimendaamin Ezhichigeyang Wellness Event Venue that it reinvests in the program (Tracey Kingbird and Eugene Standingcloud, Conversation with NCAI, July 24, 2024).

¹⁰ RLN, *Red Lake Nation P.L. 102-477 Employment and Training Division Manual*, March 25, 2024, p. 12. RLN also plans to launch a satellite service center in the closest city of Bemidji, Minnesota.