

# 2021 SUCCESS STORY

DEVILS LAKE



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## DAKOTA CEMETERY, EXCAVATION & SNOW REMOVAL

**LANGDON, ND** -- Cody Schlittenhard is no stranger to the business and entrepreneurial world. He owns fourplex apartments in addition to previously running a snow excavation and landscaping business for over ten years. Seeking change, he then sold his company and moved to Bismarck to work in a different industry. Unfortunately, this turned out to be poor timing because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This led Cody back to his hometown of Langdon, ND and to the start Dakota Cemetery, Excavation, and now Removal.



The process started when Cody heard about the upcoming retirement of the two men that had handled a not often discussed but necessary service for the area – cemetery and grave digging services. Knowing someone needed to

take over the service, Cody reached out.

ND SBDC advisor Sandy Shively assisted Cody with financial projections to take to the lender in order to finance the necessary

equipment. Schlittenhard had worked with the ND SBDC previously in regards to his fourplex apartments, so he was already familiar with the services. Seeking assistance from the SBDC again was an easy decision for him.

"They know what they're doing, [and I] would trust them with anything," says Cody. "I supplied Sandy with the numbers and information she needed for my projections and we went from there. I know I couldn't do her job with all the numbers so I really appreciate their work!"

With Sandy's help and preparation, Cody received the needed funding from the local JDA. He purchased a pickup, trailer, and a small excavator.

Although the grave digging industry may not be a typical job, it has proved rewarding for Cody - especially in a smaller town. He sees how he is able to help families by providing a necessary service.

"People come up to me and thank me for what I do," he says. "Sometimes I have buried a few people that I know from around the community or a friend. It can be tough, but it needs to be done."



Cody is appreciating being his own boss and that, with the current size of the business, he's also the only employee. He knows he is responsible for making sure business operations are running smoothly and isn't relying on the accountability of someone else. Although he mainly works with funeral homes around the Langdon area, he also coordinates with morticians from Grand Forks, Grafton, Fargo, Moorhead, and other MN towns as well when a loved one is being interred near Langdon.

Because he owned snow removal equipment already, it was a natural expansion to offer that service during winter months. And, the excavator allows him to take on other non-related projects for people as well.

While Cody's excavation and snow removal business is doing well as is, he does have plans to add some expanded services in the future. He plans to include headstone leveling and cleaning services into his repertoire. He believes that would be a service that loved ones of those who passed away would appreciate and is just another thing that Cody can keep doing for his community.