

**NATIVE COMMUNITIES' EXPERTS TO GATHER IN D.C.
TO FOCUS ON BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, JOBS, ASSET
BUILDING STRATEGIES**

WASHINGTON, D.C.///October 30-31, 2006///Nearly 80 representatives from 30 Native community development financial institutions (NCDIFs) across the United States will gather in Washington, D.C. on October 30-31, 2006 to promote entrepreneurship development, affordable housing opportunities, job creation and expanded Native asset building for their underserved communities.

The Native CDFI Convening will be hosted by Opportunity Finance Network (OFN) and the First Nations Oweesta Corporation (Oweesta). The Native CDFI Convening will be part of OFN's 22nd annual conference in Washington, D.C., taking place from October 30 – November 2, 2006. The four-day OFN gathering will bring together hundreds of community development experts from across the United States. During the Native Convening, Oweesta will debut Our Native Circle (www.ournativecircle.org), The Native Community Development Resource Center Website.

Native CDFIs and asset building institutions are playing a growing role in creating opportunity and economic strength among Native communities. The Convening will discuss the progress of the industry as well as new tools for opportunity finance and integrated asset building. A first-ever awards ceremony will honor Native CDFIs for their vision and leadership within this growing field.

Native Convening panelists and presenters will include: Tom Klyve of White Earth Investment Initiative; Dave Fleming of Lac Courte Oreilles Credit Union; Kristi Coker of Citizen Potawatomi CDC; Tanya Fiddler of Four Bands Community Fund; Elsie Meeks and Stewart Sarkozy-Banoczy of First Nations Oweesta Corporation; and Mamata Datta of Opportunity Finance Network

Representatives will be in attendance from the following NCDIFs, CDFIs, support organizations and tribal institutions, with additional representatives still being added: Aleutian Housing Authority; Aneth Community Development Corporation; California Indian Manpower Consortium; Cascadia Revolving Fund; CDFI Fund; Central Oregon Partnership; Citizen Potawatomi; Cooperative Fund of New England; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Oweesta; Four Corners Enterprise Community; Four Directions Development Corporation; Habitat for Humanity International; US department of Housing and Urban Development; Indian land Capital Company; Laguna Housing Development and Management Enterprise; Midwest Minnesota CDC; Native TANF Programs; Navajo Partnership for Housing; Pascua Yaqui Tribe; Rural Community Assistance Corporation; Rural Community Innovations; Salt River Financial Services Institution; Sicangu Fund; Teton Coalition; The Lakota Fund; The Sequoyah Fund; USDA/Rural development; and the Wind River Development Fund.

The OFN conference will take place at the JW Marriott Hotel, 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington D.C. Both meetings are open to the media. To register, visit OFN online at <http://www.opportunityfinance.net>.

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ABOUT OPPORUNITY FINANCE NETWORK

The Opportunity Finance Network is the leading network of private financial intermediaries with a proven expertise in lending prudently and productively in unconventional markets often overlooked by conventional financial institutions. Working in urban, rural, and reservation-based markets we deliver sound financial returns and real changes for people and communities. The Members of Opportunity Finance Network originated more than \$11 Billion in financing through 2005. This has generated or maintained 170,693 jobs; 35,441 businesses; 484,943 housing units; and 5,153 community facility projects. With cumulative net charge-off rates of less than 1% we are dedicated to closing the gap between promising opportunities and real accomplishments for our nation's people, communities, and markets that are outside the economic mainstream today. For more details, go to www.opportunityfinance.net.

ABOUT OWEESTA

Oweesta (<http://www.oweesta.org>), the only national, certified Native CDFI intermediary, is an affiliate of First Nations Development Institute and was launched in 1986 as the Oweesta Program & Fund to assist tribes and Native communities with community development efforts promoting small business, homeownership and economic stability. Through Oweesta's three program areas – Training, TA and Consulting, Capitalization and Advocacy, Policy and Research – Native communities receive strength, guidance, support and financing to develop permanent asset building institutions and programs. Oweesta also leads and manages the Native Financial Education Coalition (www.nfec.info) and the soon-to-be-launched Our Native Circle (www.ournativecircle.org)