



FIRST NATIONS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Educating Grassroots Practitioners – Advocating Systemic Change – Capitalizing Indian Communities

“We believe that, when armed with appropriate resources, Native peoples hold the capacity and ingenuity to ensure the sustainable, economic, spiritual, and cultural well being of their communities.”

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Nations Development Institute Releases a Financial Investment Guide for Native American Communities

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Investing for the Future was developed to meet the needs of tribes who are considering ways to provide their members with the tools they need to make decisions about the management of their financial assets.

Longmont, CO - First Nations Development Institute, a Native nonprofit located in Longmont, Colorado, has just released their most recent and comprehensive guide to financial investing titled ***Building Native Communities: Investing for the Future***. Funded by the NASD Investor Education Foundation, this workbook serves as a basic investment resource and encourages Native Americans to invest as a means of promoting financial security. First Nations developed the workbook titled ***Investing for the Future*** to respond to the needs of tribes who are considering ways to provide their members with the tools they need to make decisions about the management of their financial assets.

“We hope that this investor education tool is useful to Native community members who are interesting in learning about the financial investment field,” said Mike Roberts, President of First Nations Development Institute. “Through the Building Native Communities curriculum series we hope to generate a focus on prominent economic issues in the Native American community. It is our intent to protect our most vulnerable through financial education, economic development and empowerment.”

Investing for the Future teaches general investment principles and skills in an intuitive and accessible style. The guide illustrates the process of identifying financial goals and outlines the varying ways of achieving them. The text explains such concepts as asset allocation and recommends different investment options for different investment goals in a tribal community setting; it covers the benefits of savings accounts, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and government securities. “There is a high volume of information in the curriculum that is practical and shows how Native people can use this information to safely invest,” stated Lorna Ray of the Salt River Community Housing Division.

Additionally, the book explains essential concepts such as the time value of money, risk reduction, periodic investing, diversification, and inflation. As a large portion of the guidebook is dedicated to investing in the securities markets, the text helps to clarify more advanced concepts such as stock assessment and portfolio management. Gaylene Pretty Bird, the Executive Director of the Sicangu Fund, an emerging Community Financial Development Institute on the Rosebud Sioux

Indian Reservation comments, “it is a wonderful compliment to other economic development types of training for the Native American community – a much needed component which has not been addressed to a large extent in the past.”

First Nations Development Institute has designed the guide to pair values, investment strategy, and concerns of Native Americans with pertinent financial advice. Through a three-pronged strategy of education, advocacy, and capitalization, First Nations Development Institute is working to restore Native control and culturally-compatible stewardship of the assets they own - be they land, human potential, cultural heritage, or financial resources - and to establish new assets for ensuring the long-term vitality of Native communities. This mission is especially pertinent today when more and more tribes are taking control of their trust funds and a large number of tribes are paying out per capita payments to their members. “You have to change the paradigm about the idea that money is here today and gone tomorrow. Change the way a poverty culture views the money,” said Cynthia Tam a Certified Financial Planner and financial columnist, concerning the need to take steps to implement the curriculum.

Each year, 73 tribes distribute per capita payments to their members. Because per-capita payments are held in trust funds for many youth until they turn 18, many find a large sum of money available to them at that early age. The influx of per capita payments in some Native communities is changing the outlook for Native Americans and the tribal economy but is also leading many into financial vulnerability. The Cherokee Preservation Foundation recognizes the significance of financial education for young people about to receive their first per-capita payments: “It is very tempting for [youth] to withdraw their funds at this time. Many of these young men and women have not learned financial management skills. As a result, many have spent their trust funds very quickly on cars and other items young people crave, only to find belatedly they do not qualify for financial aid for college.” (<http://cherokeepreservationfdn.org>)

Much of the text is interactive and promotes reader participation. This makes the workbook perfect for anyone who is apprehensive about what to do with their money and how to begin planning their financial future. The activities encourage the reader to put together an investment plan that relates to cultural practices and expenses, and take the recommended steps to start saving.

The text is simple enough for personal use, but thorough to the extent that investment advisors, tribal councils, tribal colleges, and other nonprofit organizations can easily adopt it and put it to work in a course or workshop. First Nations plans to offer a free Train-the-Trainer workshops on this investor education curriculum in 2007.

Investing for the Future is available free of charge at the First Nations Development Institute website (www.firstnations.org); ordering information for free hard copies is also available. **For more information about the curriculum contact Sarah Dewees at sdewees@firstnations.org.**

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