

Taala Fund: Are We There Yet? Insights on progress and visions for the future

By Natalie Charley, Executive Director

Progress - It seems so long ago, and yet, not that long at all, when Taala Fund came into existence and received 501 (c) 3 status. And it really wasn't that long ago when the first small business loan was approved, check handed over, and a happy Quinault tribal business man walked out the door with a business loan to expand his carpet-cleaning business.

Taala Fund has come so far. Now we have seven booked loans and more pending. Several of the loans are credit-builder loans, which can - and do - get complicated. We held three comprehensive Indianpreneurship classes with 12 graduates to date. We've held business orientation, credit report, budgeting/savings, and even "Buying a Car" classes to assist our customers. Taala Fund staff and partners have assisted customers with business plans, business and credit counseling, and other technical assistance.

One complaint is that the loan process through Taala Fund can be slow. My response is, yes, we do have an application process where customers complete an application, a credit report is pulled, and income statements, business plans, income verification, certification of Indian blood, and other documents are required. There is a loan committee who approves the loan. And closing/post-closing paperwork must be signed. Finally, we are new at this business.

On the PLUS side, Taala Fund pulls your credit report to not only see what our risk is, but to also assist our customers to improve their credit scores. Sometimes we may require positive movement on your credit (and we work with willing customers to get you to get there) prior to moving your loan application through the process.

Also, your efforts to pursue a loan through Taala Fund may result in a lower interest rate and/or lower

monthly payments. Monthly payments are based on the life of your collateral (by the way, collateral is required in many cases to secure the loan so that we can provide those lower interest rates.)

Taala Fund is reviewing our ocean fisherman process to see if we can create a loan product based on seasonality. I'll inform you as we move forward.

The future - Taala Fund will be pursuing a five-year grant to provide a savings-match Individual Development Account (IDA) program. We will start out with a post-secondary education matching program and target our youth. With this savings program we will develop savings/budgeting classes, financial education classes, and career opportunity workshops and events.

You might be asking, what is a savings-match program? We will work with high school and college students to set up a savings goal to pay for a part of their college. Once they meet their savings goal, we can match them 1 to 1 up to 8 to 1, depending on our policies. Example: If Taala Fund has a 4 to 1 match for college, and the student had a goal of saving \$500, we'd match with an additional \$2,000, making his or her contribution \$2,500. And, if the IDA student is approved for a QIN scholarship/grant to cover a portion of his/her unmet college need, we may be able to develop it so the savings amount, plus our match, covers the remaining unmet need for the year. This is all preliminary but, should we get the grant, it will be a five-year project.

Before submitting this application, Taala Fund staff will conduct a survey to garner interest among the communities. Further, we will hold strategy sessions with potential key partners (like our education department and the YOP program) to develop concepts for the Memorandums of Agreement that we will create during the front-end of the grant we hopefully get. And finally, Taala Fund needs to raise matching dollars. And lots of it.

I could fill several pages of the Nugquam to really describe all that we do and are doing... so consider this a snapshot of where Taala Fund is... and where we are going in the near future.

Western Regional Tribal Leaders Address Cobell Trust Land Consolidation Program with Federal Officials

Additional Consultation Meeting Set for the Great Plains Region

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Department of Interior (DOI) Solicitor Hilary Tompkins, Associate Deputy Secretary Meghan Conklin, and Deputy Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs for Policy and Economic Development Jodi Gillette met with tribal officials in Phoenix, Ariz., on September 29, 2011, for the fifth of six scheduled regional government-to-government consultation meetings on the Trust Land Consolidation component of the Cobell Settlement. The meetings with tribal leaders are a part of the Obama Administration's commitment to re-invigorating nation-to-nation relationships with tribes.

In response to requests from tribal leaders, the Interior Department is making two additions to the consultation process for the Trust Land Consolidation Program under the Cobell Settlement. First, Interior will host a seventh regional tribal consultation session in the BIA Great Plains Region on October 26, 2011, in Rapid City, South Dakota. Second, the Department is extending the public comment period to November 1, 2011, in order to allow more time for written comments to be submitted.

"These consultation sessions are integral to the implementation of the Cobell Settlement," said Tompkins. "I am very interested in hearing from the tribal leadership on their concerns and issues relating to a satisfactory conclusion of this landmark case."

"The consultations are progressively moving forward towards ways of implementing the settlement," said Conklin. "Interior is pleased with the tribal input from these sessions and will continue to work closely with the tribes."

"The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is pleased with the process and on-going consultations on this matter," said Gillette. "Consultations demonstrate this administration's commitment to continue its respect for tribal sovereignty."

The participants included leaders and representatives of a number of

tribes from the Western Region and other Regions.

On May 27, 2011, U.S. Senior District Judge Thomas F. Hogan granted communication between representatives of the United States and Cobell class members only in regards to the Trust Land Consolidation component of the Settlement.

BACKGROUND ON COBELL SETTLEMENT:

The \$3.4 billion Cobell settlement was approved by Congress on November 30, 2010 (Claims Resolution Act of 2010) and signed by President Obama on December 8, 2010. The Cobell Settlement will address the Federal Government's responsibility for an historical accounting of individual Indian trust accounts and trust mismanagement claims on behalf of more than 300,000 individual Indians. A fund of \$1.5 billion will be used to compensate class members for their historical accounting, trust administration and asset mismanagement claims.

In addition, to address the continued proliferation of thousands of new trust accounts caused by the "fractionation" of land interests through succeeding generations, the Settlement establishes a \$1.9 billion fund for the voluntary buy-back and consolidation of fractionated land interests. The land consolidation program will provide individual American Indians with an opportunity to obtain cash payments for divided land interests and free up the land for the benefit of tribal communities. Up to \$60 million of the \$1.9 billion will be set aside to provide scholarships for post secondary higher education and vocational training for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The locations and dates for the remaining regional tribal consultations can be found at: www.doi.gov/cobell.

NORTHWEST Native American CHAMBER

The Northwest Native Chamber presents

First Annual Business Showcase

2011 Theme
Face to Facebook
October 20-21, 2011
Little Creek Casino Resort

The Northwest's premier gathering of Tribal Enterprises, Tribal Entrepreneurs and their partners in the growing Tribal economy!!

NW Native Chamber Business Showcase
The Real Social Network
www.nwnac.org

For more information contact Natalie Charley at ncharley.org

Canoe Welcoming

Kent, WA - Middle and high school students and families welcomed an ocean going canoe built by Quinault Master Carver Guy Capoeman to Kent on Saturday, September 24th. Youth from Kent, WA and Oakland, CA have traveled to Taholah on weekends since the spring to work on the canoe under Guy's direction along with Taholah youth. On Saturday, families, students, community members and leaders, a n d e l e c t e d o f f i c i a l s gathered to welcome the canoe to the O'Dell Center in Kent.

The 32-foot strip canoe is built from a windfall

Quinault cedar tree over 1,000 years old. A carved eagle crests the canoe's bow. On Saturday teams under Capoeman's direction painted the eagle onto the sides of the canoe. A barbecue was offered, as well as organic baked potatoes and fresh vegetables from the youth and families' O'Dell Center gardens, and fry bread. Young children participated in painting projects. Tours were offered of the O'Dell Center's salmon bearing streams, forest, and trails.

Capoeman, master carver from the Quinault Nation, has been directing the project in conjunction with the In-

stitute for Community Leadership. The primary purpose of the canoe project is education. The canoe is named "R.S. Capoeman" in honor of Randy Capoeman. The Institute for Community Leadership currently stewards a totem carved by Randy at its Kent campus.

The construction of the canoe under Guy's direction has provided youth from diverse cultures and urban areas the opportunity to learn about tribal sovereignty and the struggle for self-determination. It has also provided for

Quinault youth and elders to share their culture. The canoe will be stewarded by the Institute. It will travel by trailer to schools around the Salish Sea and to the Bay Area in California, permitting diverse students and adults to learn

of the role that tribes play in the protection of the fish, the rivers and ocean, and the forest and animals.

The Institute offers leadership classes to middle and senior high students in the states of Washington, Oregon and California to strengthen democracy and construct community. Both Randy Capoeman and Phillip Martin, Jr. have served on the Board of Directors of the Institute for Community Leadership. For more information contact: Roy Wilson at roy@icleadership.org or 206 571 6653.

