

ONABEN gears up for Trading at the River conference for Native businesses

PORTLAND, Ore. – ONABEN – A Native American Business Network and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation (ATNI-EDC) are pleased to announce that registration is open for the 10th Annual Trading at the River on April 19-20 at the Embassy Suites (Portland Airport).

Trading at the River is the premier conference for American Indian businesses and leaders in economic development. This year's conference theme is *Transforming our Communities Through Entrepreneurship: Catch the dream, Follow the Spirit, Make it Happen*.

This is the second year that ONABEN and ATNI have joined forces to celebrate the successes of Indian-owned enterprises and the resources that provide funding and technical assistance to American Indians in business.

"We are working hard to ensure that this year's event continues to provide a unique opportunity for vendors to connect with one another and leaders in business development to share best practices," said Veronica Hix, ONABEN marketing and entrepreneurial services manager. "Our group understands the importance of growing not only businesses, but the programs and resources that support Native American-owned companies throughout Indian Country."

According to Hix, ONABEN will provide weekly updates in an effort to grow participation levels and to keep registrants up to date on important information leading up to the conference.

Trading at the River offers vendors a venue to showcase their products and services, while providing insightful information on business development resources

and a platform for programs to share information and knowledge to further the position of Indian-owned companies in the business community.

Online registration for Trading at the River is available at onaben.org. Sponsorships also are available.

ONABEN, a Native American Business Network, was founded in 1991 as a nonprofit organization by four Oregon Tribes to enable American Indians to realize their dreams of a better quality of life through owning and operating a successful business. The vision of the organization is of a healthy economy for the Pacific Northwest American Indian community.

The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, founded on the principles of unity and cooperation among Indian governments and people, is a nonprofit organization representing 54 Northwest Tribal

governments from Oregon, Washington, Southeast Alaska, Northern California and Montana.

To better serve its member base, the ATNI Economic Development Corporation was established to advocate for member Tribes and their business entities with a mission to support economic development as a distinct entity separate from Tribal governments.

Together, ONABEN and the ATNI-EDC strive to provide the technical assistance and advocacy that will help drive Native-owned businesses to a greater level of success. Trading at the River is a step forward in their mission-driven directives and evidence of the commitment that each organization has to Indian Country.

For more information about the conference, contact Veronica Hix at veronica@onaben.org, or call 800-854-8289.

New online course available for American Indian small business owners

WASHINGTON – American Indian entrepreneurs have a new tool to help determine if they're ready for business ownership and to help them get started.

Native American Small Business Primer: Strategies for Success is a free, self-paced online business course developed for American Indian business owners. The course provides an overview of basic business principles and makes them aware of the programs and services available from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

"*Native American Small Business Primer: Strategies for Success* will enhance the agency's effort to provide important resources for emerging Native

American entrepreneurs," said SBA Administrator Karen Mills. "Our ultimate goal is to help create jobs and stimulate economic and business development in our Native American communities. This course is an essential business development tool for the entrepreneur's toolbox."

The new online course emphasizes business planning and market research as essential steps to take before going into business; informs Native American entrepreneurs about the legal aspects of starting a business, including the type of ownership (legal structure) and licensing; and provides key information on seed money for starting up, raising capital and borrowing money.

In addition, it includes a section on how to estimate business startup costs that can help assess the financial needs of going into business.

The course is available from the SBA's Online Small Business Training web page under Online Courses for Starting Your Business at sba.gov/content/online-courses-starting-your-business.

SBA's Office of Native American Affairs works to ensure that American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities have full access to all SBA programs and services. Each year, more than 200,000 American Indian- and Alaska Native-owned and 29,000 Native Hawaiian-owned businesses add billions to the American economy.

Course participants completing the online training programs can earn a certificate of completion from the SBA with their name, date and course title. The Native American Small Business Primer course is one of nearly 30 online tutorials offered by the SBA's Online Business Training (sba.gov/training). Free courses are offered on starting a business, managing a business, financing a business and contracting.

SBA also can help pair new business owners with expert advisers, counseling and mentoring services through an SBA representative or resource partner about management assistance, financing options or participating local SBA lenders.

Leasing reform will spur commercial, residential and renewable energy development on Indian lands, restore greater control to Tribal governments

Proposed rule will remove federal roadblocks to economic development

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk announced in November a sweeping reform of federal surface leasing regulations for American Indian lands that will streamline the approval process for home ownership, expedite economic development and spur renewable energy development in Indian Country.

The proposed rule would modify regulations governing the Bureau of Indian Affairs' process for approving the lease of surface acres on lands the federal government holds in trust for Tribes and individuals. As trustee, Interior is responsible for managing approximately 56 million surface acres in Indian Country.

"The proposed changes are the most comprehensive reforms of Indian land leasing regulations in more than 50 years and will have a real impact for individuals and families who want to own a home or build a business," said Salazar. "This reform underscores President Obama's commitment to empower Indian nations

and strengthen their economies by expanding opportunities for individual landowners and Tribal governments – generating investment, new jobs and revenues."

"At its core, this reform is about good government and supporting self-determination for Indian nations," said Echo Hawk. "The revised regulations will bring greater transparency, efficiency and workability to the Bureau of Indian Affairs approval process and will provide Tribal communities and individuals certainty and flexibility when it comes to decisions on the use of their land."

The existing regulations, adopted in 1961, take an antiquated "one-size fits all" approach to processing all surface leases. Under the current system, which lacks a defined process or deadlines, it is not uncommon for a simple mortgage application to languish for several years while waiting for approval from the federal government.

The proposed reform identifies specific processes – with enforceable timelines – through which the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) must review leases. The regulation establishes separate simplified processes for residential, business and renewable energy development so that, for example, a lease for a single

family home is distinguished from a large solar energy project.

The proposed rule provides a 30-day limit for the BIA to issue decisions on residential leases, subleases and mortgages. For commercial or industrial development, the BIA would have 60 days to review leases and subleases. If the BIA does not complete its review of subleases in this time frame, those agreements will automatically go into effect.

Other proposed changes would eliminate the requirement for BIA approval of permits for short-term activities on Indian lands, such as parades, and require the BIA to approve leases unless it finds a compelling reason to disapprove. Under the new rule, the BIA would defer to the Tribe's negotiated value for a lease of Tribal land and would not require additional costly appraisals.

"The proposed regulation incorporates numerous changes requested by Tribal leaders during extensive consultations this past year and better meets the goals of facilitating and expediting the leasing process for trust lands," said Principal Deputy Assistant for Indian Affairs Del Laverdure.

During the initial consultation period, more than 2,300 comments were received from more than 70 Tribes as well as sev-

eral federal agencies, including HUD, USDA and the IRS. The publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register of Nov. 29 kicked off a 60-day public comment period with additional Tribal meetings scheduled.

The BIA regulatory drafting workgroup is expected to review the comments and publish the final rule in 2012.

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