

# 2025 Annual Report



*Redefining Equity. Reclaiming Native Sovereignty. Together.*

# Honoring the Land and Indigenous Peoples

*“We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional lands of Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island, Hawaii, and Alaska. We honor the countless Tribal Nations, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Yip’ik, Aleut/Unangan, Athabaskan, and Native Hawaiian communities who have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial, and whose relationships to place remain vital, living, and enduring.*

*We are grateful for their care of the lands and waters and recognize the deep cultural, spiritual, and economic connections that bind Indigenous communities to all of Turtle Island, Hawaii and Alaska.*

*We recognize acknowledgment alone is not enough. We commit to accountability through meaningful action. This includes investing in Indigenous-led solutions, supporting Native and Indigenous-led institutions, building long-term and reciprocal partnerships, and ensuring Indigenous voices and leadership are centered in the decisions that affect their communities.*

*Through our work, partnerships, and resources, we commit to advancing equity, strengthening resilience, and honoring Indigenous sovereignty—today and for future generations.”*

## Our Purpose

### **Mission Statement**

Oweesta Corporation’s mission is to provide opportunities for Native people to develop financial assets and create wealth by assisting in the establishment of strong, permanent institutions and programs contributing to economic independence and strengthening sovereignty for all Native communities.

---

### **Values**

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

# Table of Contents

Letter from the CEO.....	4
Board of Directors .....	5
Our People .....	6
2025: A Pivotal Year of Transition and Growth .....	7
Capital in All Directions: Investing in Native Futures.....	8
Delivering Impact Across Programs .....	10
Building Native Communities.....	10
Native CDFI Practitioner Certification Program.....	14
Native Housing Counseling Network.....	15
Powering Change Through Partnership .....	16
Native Gathering Day at OFN Conference.....	17
10th Annual Native CDFI Capital Access Convening .....	18
Partner Successes .....	23
What Our Investors Are Saying.....	27
Portfolio Partners.....	28
Financials.....	29

# Letter from the CEO



At Oweesta, we often say that capital is most powerful when it is paired with trust, relationships, and a long view. This year reaffirmed that belief in every way.

Across Tribal nations, Native communities continue to lead—building businesses, housing, clean energy solutions, and financial institutions rooted in culture and accountability. At the same time, we are navigating a moment of real complexity:

economic uncertainty, persistent inequities in access to capital, and increasing pressure on Native-led institutions to do more with less. In moments like this, clarity matters. So does courage.

## Together, we chose to lean in.

This year, Oweesta deployed and leveraged capital to strengthen Native Community Development Financial Institutions, expand access to financing, and support systems that last. We invested not only in projects, but in people—practitioners, leaders, and communities who are shaping their own futures. Through lending, training, certification, convenings, and partnerships, we continued to build the infrastructure Native economies need to thrive.

**One of the most powerful lessons from this year is that scale does not come from speed alone—it comes from alignment.** By pairing capital with capacity building, coaching, and peer networks, we are seeing deeper impact and stronger institutions. Our **Native CDFI Practitioner Certification Program** is strengthening the field from within. Our participation lending and housing counseling work are expanding reach while reinforcing local leadership. Our convenings—especially the **10th Annual Capital Access Convening**—continue to prove the power of gathering in community to share knowledge, celebrate progress, and imagine what's next.

We also saw momentum grow in areas that point to the future. Through the **Building Native Futures Fund** and our clean energy finance work, we

are helping Native communities access capital for projects that generate opportunity while honoring land and culture. These efforts reflect a broader truth: **Native-led solutions are not niche—they are essential to building resilient, inclusive economies.**

## None of this happens alone.

This year, we were honored to deepen partnerships with investors, banks, philanthropic leaders, federal agencies, and peer organizations who believe in Native-led solutions, strong Tribal economies, and long-term community impact. Your support fuels not just individual programs, but an ecosystem—one where Native institutions are resourced, respected, and positioned to lead.

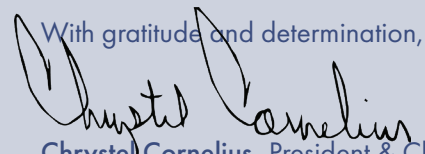
As we look ahead, the opportunity before us is clear. The demand for capital, training, and trusted partnership in Tribal nations continues to grow. The institutions we serve are ready. The ideas are strong. The momentum is real.

## What this moment calls for is a decision: to double down.

### **Double down on Native-led systems.**

Double down on patient, purpose-driven capital.  
Double down on partnerships that move beyond transactions toward transformation.

Thank you for standing with us, for believing in this work, and for helping build a future where Native communities have the tools, resources, and power to shape their own destinies. We are honored to do this work alongside you—and excited for what we will build together next.

With gratitude and determination,  


Chrystel Cornelius, President & Chief Executive Officer  
Oweesta Corporation

# Oweesta Board of Directors

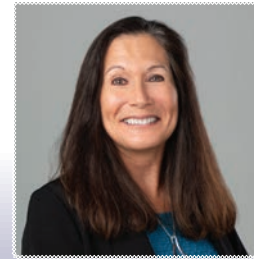
Oweesta Corporation has a six-member Board of Directors, consisting of a diverse representation, including different tribes, geographic areas, community and Native leaders, and business and professional representatives. Our board provides strategic direction and oversight to keep Oweesta focused on our dynamic mission.



**Robin Danner**  
Chair  
(Native Hawaiian/Kaua'i)



**Derek Valdo**  
Vice-Chair  
(Acoma)



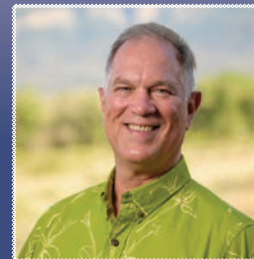
**Susan Hammond**  
Secretary/Treasurer  
(Penobscot Nation)



**Jeff Bowman**  
Member  
(Mohican)



**Rodger Boyd**  
Member  
(Navajo)

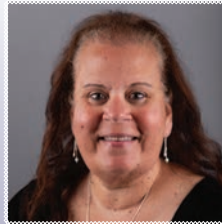


**Fran Lutz**  
Member

# Our People



**Chrystel Cornelius**  
President & CEO  
(Ojibwe; Oneida)



**Florence Ludka**  
CFO  
(Ojibwe)



**Heather Rademacher  
Taylor**  
COO



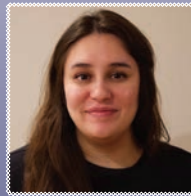
**Jamie Olson**  
CLO  
(Nez Perce)



**Sayre Savage**  
Director of Programs



**Vincent Grant**  
Sr. Programs Officer  
(Ojibwe)



**Marisa Peterson**  
Programs Officer  
(Oglala/Hunkpapa Lakota)



**Alexandra Shaughnessy**  
Director of Investments & Reporting



**Mikeala Purvis**  
Investments & Reporting Officer  
(Anishinaabe)



**Michelle Carlson**  
Finance Assistant



**Penny Wynn**  
Accounting Officer  
(Chickahominy)



**Trevor Bradford**  
Sr. Loan Officer



**Zack Huberty**  
Loan Officer  
(White Earth Ojibwe/Pillager)



**Tawny Wilson**  
Sr. Director of Advancement  
(Sicangu/Oglala Lakota)



**Louie Rios III**  
Director of Advancement  
(Ojibwe)



**Mary Deiter**  
Sr. Advancement Officer  
(Peepeekisis Cree Nation)



**Sandy Thompson**  
Communications Director



**Isaiah Cornelius**  
Software Developer  
(Chippewa)

# 2025: A Pivotal Year of Transition and Growth

As many CDFIs across the country experienced, 2025 was marked by significant federal and political uncertainty. Long-standing, trusted sources of government funding—particularly those supporting Tribal and rural communities—shifted in ways that challenged the stability of our field.

In this moment, Oweesta witnessed—and stood alongside—something more powerful: the enduring resilience, strength, and conviction of Tribal communities. **Across Indian Country, Native CDFIs and Tribal leaders continued to adapt, lead, and move forward with clarity and purpose.**

Through our work, we saw not hesitation, but determination—a commitment to advancing Native-led solutions rooted in community, culture, and sovereignty. In doing so, 2025 affirmed what we know to be true: Native CDFIs scale when capital and capacity align; flexible capital unlocks critical infrastructure; and Indigenous-led systems consistently outperform extractive models.

Oweesta’s role was not only to respond, but to stand in that strength—supporting and investing in solutions designed to endure well beyond any single funding cycle.

For over two decades, Oweesta has partnered with Native CDFIs to expand access to capital across Indian Country. Since inception:

- **\$1,463,770,814\*** in total lending
- **41,285** loans deployed
- Representing **thousands** of Native businesses, homeowners, and individuals supported

## Cumulative Impact



### BUSINESS IMPACT

**\$889,321,808** deployed

**6,193** loans

**4,434** Native-owned businesses supported

**24,856** jobs created and retained

**1,213** women-owned businesses



### HOUSING IMPACT

**\$272,208,499** deployed

**1,930** loans

**1,053** Native homeowners supported

**335** homes built

**569** first-time homebuyers



### CONSUMER IMPACT

**\$184,545,949** deployed

**33,039** loans

**23,695** Native individuals served

**\$77.6M** in auto loans

**\$34.7M** in credit-building and debt consolidation

# Capital in All Directions: A \$150M Native Futures Fund

In 2025, Oweesta advanced our commitment to strengthening Native economies by launching two new capital strategies designed to support Tribal Nations and Native CDFIs at scale. Grounded in the Four Directions of Capital framework, Oweesta continues to take a holistic approach—aligning financial, human, social, and cultural capital to support the full strength and resilience of Native communities.

This year also marked the launch of the Building Native Futures Fund—Oweesta’s largest capital pool to date. This transformative initiative deploys flexible capital into clean energy and infrastructure projects, while also advancing an equity component that provides grant support to Native CDFIs. Through this approach, Oweesta is expanding participation lending opportunities and ensuring that Native institutions are not only recipients of capital, but active partners in deploying it across Indian Country.

The **Building Native Futures Fund** is more than a financing vehicle—it is a bold step toward reclaiming economic autonomy. Grounded in sovereignty, self-determination, and cultural sustainability, the Fund equips Native Nations to build critical infrastructure for today and for generations to come.

Through Oweesta Corporation, we mobilize philanthropic, public, and private capital to advance Native-led clean energy, broadband, housing, and community infrastructure—unlocking the full potential of Native economies.

Native communities are experiencing a powerful resurgence, yet critical gaps remain. Now is the time to build this fund:

- 14% of households on Tribal lands lack electricity (*10x the national average*)
- \$20B+ in identified infrastructure and renewable energy need

Native Nations are already advancing solutions—from solar microgrids to broadband expansion—but need flexible, early-stage capital to bring projects to life.

## How the Fund Works | \$150M Total Investment

- \$65M Bridge Financing: construction loans for energy, housing, and infrastructure

- \$65M Long-Term Financing — term loans to sustain economic development
- \$20M CDFI Capacity — grants to expand Native CDFI lending power

## Fund Mission

- Bridge capital gaps with direct financing
- Advance energy sovereignty and resilience
- Scale community-owned development and generational wealth
- Strengthen Native CDFIs as infrastructure leaders

## Investor Opportunity

A structured, low-risk fixed-income vehicle designed for impact:

- 5–15 year terms | 0–3% interest | fully collateralized
- Financing for energy, water, and broadband infrastructure

## Why Invest in the Fund

- Accelerate climate and clean energy solutions
- Support Tribal sovereignty and self-determination
- Unlock federal and state funding opportunities
- Invest in shovel-ready, community-driven projects
- Backed by 25+ years of lending with zero investor defaults

The **Four Directions of Capital** anchor Oweesta’s vision for economic development—an Indigenous framework rooted in balance, relationship, and long-term community well-being. It reflects our belief that Native communities deserve access to capital that honors sovereignty, strengthens self-determination, and builds prosperity for generations.

True progress requires more than one kind of investment. It requires capital working together as a system.

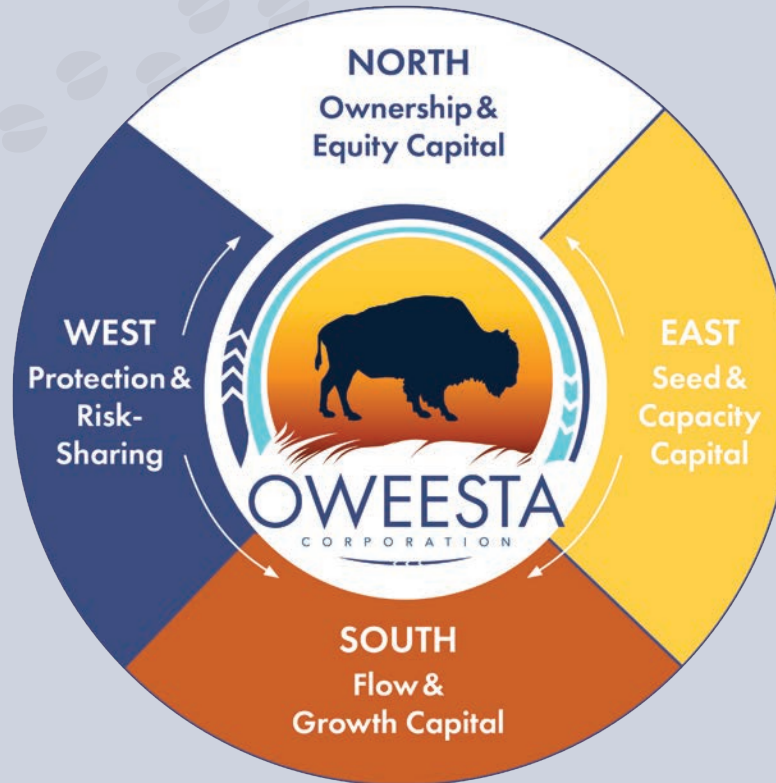
### Four Directions. One System.

- **East | Seed & Capacity Capital**  
Grants, technical assistance, and capacity-building resources that help Native CDFIs and communities prepare, plan, and grow
- **South | Flow & Growth Capital**  
Lending that supports homeownership, small business development, and pathways to economic opportunity
- **West | Protection & Risk-Sharing**  
Guarantees, loan loss reserves, and federal tools that reduce barriers and unlock larger investment
- **North | Ownership & Equity Capital**  
Long-term control, wealth building, and community ownership—ensuring Native people shape their own futures

### Designing Systems for Impact

We use the Four Directions of Capital to build systems that move resources with intention:

- **East** builds readiness and removes roadblocks
- **South** moves capital into communities
- **West** unlocks larger-scale investment
- **North** shifts power and ensures long-term control



### From Extraction to Circulation

Together, these directions form a **circle of capital** that strengthens Native CDFIs, supports community priorities, and builds lasting prosperity. Where capital has historically flowed out of Indian Country, this approach brings it in, directs it where it’s needed most, and supports it to remain—generating long-term impact.

*When capital moves in all four directions, it becomes more than funding—it becomes a force for sovereignty, resilience, and the flourishing of Native communities.*

# Delivering Impact Across Programs

In 2025, Oweesta's programmatic efforts expanded both in reach and depth—delivering direct support, training, and technical assistance to Native CDFIs and Tribal communities across the country. **Over the course of the year, Oweesta provided more than 2,235 hours of training and technical assistance, reaching over 1,706 practitioners through trainings, conferences, and webinars. Through its housing programs, Oweesta's Native Housing Counseling Network supported 1,880 households**, while also delivering certification study groups, monthly trainings, and technical support to strengthen housing counseling capacity across the field. Across all program areas, Oweesta led dozens of trainings, workshops, and certification-based learning opportunities in financial literacy, coaching, and community development—while continuing to expand culturally grounded curriculum, including financial coaching, trauma-informed financial education, and new programming focused on elders and community leadership.

## Building Native Communities

Oweesta's longest-standing and most trusted program, Building Native Communities (BNC), remains the foundation of our work and a driving force behind economic empowerment across Native communities. Over the years, BNC has grown into a comprehensive suite of culturally grounded training and education services, designed by and for Native communities, and rooted in Indigenous values and lived experience. Today, BNC continues to evolve, expanding its courses, tools, and reach to meet the real and changing needs of Native families and institutions. Through this work, Oweesta equips communities with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to take control of their financial futures and build pathways forward based on their own priorities and goals.

Delivered by certified trainers who live and work within the communities they serve, BNC blends traditional knowledge with practical financial education, creating learning environments grounded in trust, culture, and relevance. This model ensures that financial empowerment is not external or transactional, but community-led and sustainable.

In 2025, **Oweesta certified 111 new trainers through 18 Train-the-Trainer workshops**, expanding a growing national network that now includes **1,145 certified BNC trainers**. These leaders return home prepared to deliver financial education where it matters most, locally, relationally, and in ways that reflect the realities of their communities.

Through BNC, Oweesta is not only expanding access to financial knowledge, it is advancing Native leadership, strengthening self-governance, and building lasting pathways toward economic sovereignty.



BNC Trauma-Informed Financial Practitioner Training in partnership with Wells Fargo (New Orleans, LA, Aug. 2025)

## 2025 Trainings & Presentations

**111**

Building Native Communities (BNC) certified trainers

**757**

webinar participants

**332**

attendees  
(10th Annual Capital Access Convening)

**222**

participants of Oweesta Financial Coaching Trainings

**4,208**

clients coached by our coaching participants

These trainings strengthen the local leaders who carry financial education into their communities.

# Annual Instructor Survey Responses

BNC certified trainers' work led to:

**440** New Banking Accounts Opened

**754** People Increased Credit Scores

**19.5** Average Increase in Credit Scores

**696** People Increased Savings

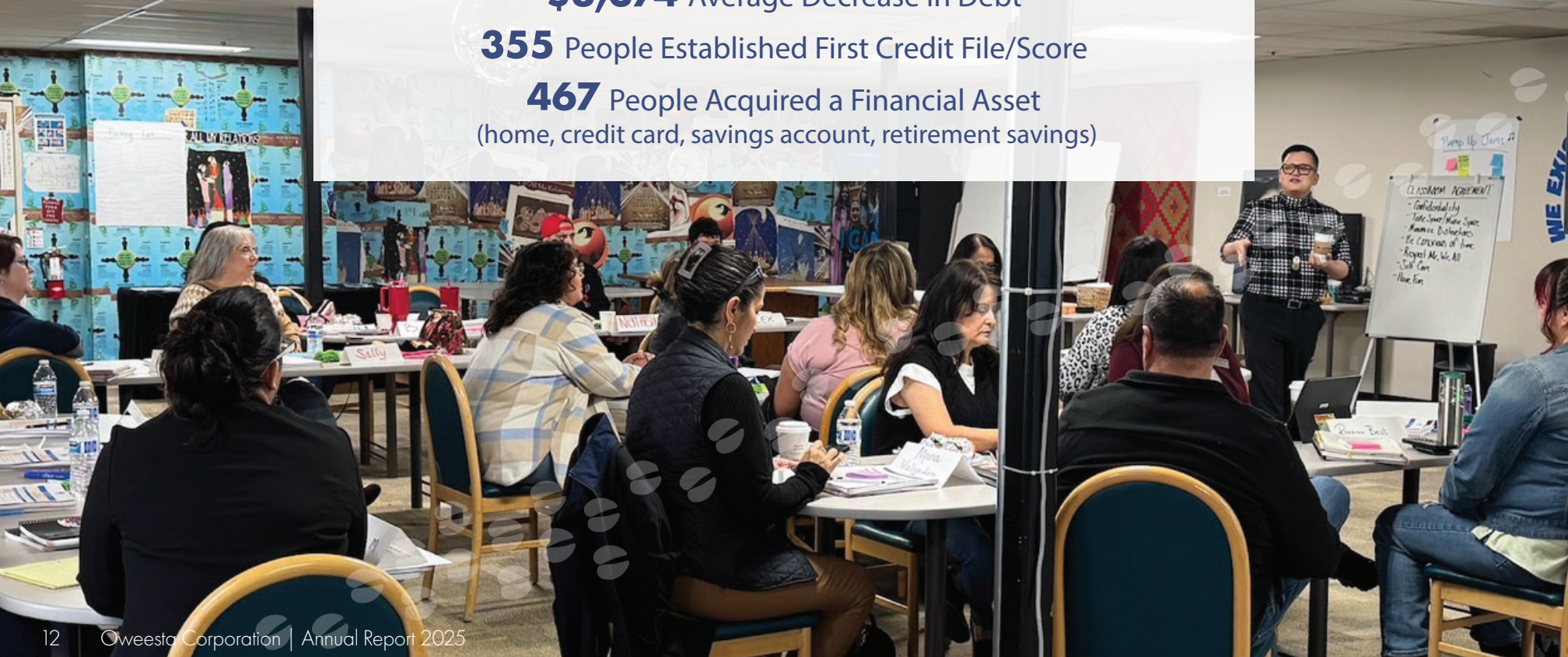
**\$3,705** Average Increase in Savings

**726** People Decreased Debt

**\$8,374** Average Decrease in Debt

**355** People Established First Credit File/Score

**467** People Acquired a Financial Asset  
(home, credit card, savings account, retirement savings)



## BNC Certified Trainer Successes

*"I had one participant who went from a troubled background to becoming a successful manager at a popular Casey's store. She learned how to save money and bought herself a very nice car. She has her own place and continues to save money for anything she wants to do in the future. I am so proud of her and everything she has accomplished and is continuing to accomplish."*

—Susan Sharp, Cherokee Nation

*"I have elders that are identifying scams better and not getting scammed as much. I have youth that didn't know anything about taxes, credit and savings or checking accounts who are now navigating their banking successfully while increasing their savings."*

—Maria Rico, Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians

*"After the 4th lesson, participants let me know they felt inspired to get their financial house in order. Several shared they wrote a budget they can live with. Some shared after they reviewed their finances, realized they can shave off a few excessive expenses. And use the money that was going to the excessive expenses towards savings. Others shared they applied for credit. One shared they didn't qualify for credit but knows what he needs to do to work towards getting a credit card. And set up a budget for himself too."*

—Yvette Pinkham, Mother Nation

*"I personally assisted a customer in gaining financial freedom through debt resolution and savings within a year."*

—Tammy Valdez, Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

*"There is often a lot of shame and one on one coaching is easier for clients to feel safe. I think it is just so great to see people start to get out of high interest debt and feel like they learned something from the experience and are so grateful that we are here to help them create new habits for their futures."*

—Kelli Johnson, Pacific Northwest Tribal Lending

*"Doing a training during summer employment for youth, we helped a lot of them open savings and checking accounts for the money earned during the summer. A couple children let me know that they saved most of all their checks and paid for the school clothes with a debit card. It made them feel very proud."*

—Rainie Walls, Fort Belknap Economic Development - Credit

*"I'm working with an elder on buying her first home! We've been meeting for about two months, and at the start, homeownership was not even on her radar. Not because it was impossible, but because she truly didn't believe it was something she could do. So instead of diagnosing, I listened. I asked more "why" questions. That's when the lightbulb hit: her rent was already higher than the payment for a smaller home just a few miles away. Once she could see that possibility clearly, her choices shifted fast and on purpose. She has already paid off three credit cards, and her spending is now aligned with a goal that brings real retirement security: stable housing. The best part: we didn't just move from crisis to solution. She arrived at the empowered conclusion herself, "I can do this," and watching that switch flip from "not enough" to "I can" is a spark I'll keep with me. Please send a huge cheer up to the sky for my learner!"*

—Abby Miller, Cook Inlet Lending Center

# Native CDFI Practitioner Certification Program

Oweesta's Native CDFI Practitioner Certification Program continued to play a key role in building field-wide capacity in 2025. Across the year, Oweesta delivered 18 track trainings—including **Financial Management I, Underwriting: Consumer and Small Business Lending, and Effective Fundraising & Capitalization**—alongside a **Fundamentals Week** and more than 10 **Development track** trainings. These offerings supported practitioners at all levels, strengthening skills across lending, financial management, leadership, and community-based programming.

Participants engaged across four core tracks—Lending, Executive Management, Development Services, and Financial Management—reflecting the full scope of work Native CDFIs carry out as lenders, educators, and community builders. Trainings were grounded in the real-world context of Native finance, addressing the complexities of operating in Tribal communities and supporting institutions as they grow.



In 2025, the program also introduced a refreshed identity rooted in culture and meaning. Centered around the turtle—a symbol of longevity, resilience, and connection to land—the rebrand incorporates visual elements representing each track: a star for leadership, reflecting vision and guidance; a circle for lending, symbolizing reciprocity and the flow of resources; balancing rocks for financial management, representing stability and stewardship; and a sprout for development services, embodying growth for future generations. Together, these elements celebrate Native identity while uplifting the skills and sovereignty of Native CDFI practitioners nationwide.

Through this work, Oweesta continues to strengthen the capacity of Native CDFIs to deploy capital, deliver programs, and advance community-defined economic futures.



Effective Fundraising and Capitalization Training (Bellingham, WA, Aug. 2025)

# Native Housing Counseling Network

Founded in 2018, the Native Housing Counseling Network (NHCN) is the only national network dedicated to advancing Native homeownership and housing stability. Made up of Native-led and Native-serving organizations across Indian Country, Alaska, and Hawai'i, the Network strengthens local capacity by providing culturally responsive housing counseling—from homebuying and credit building to foreclosure prevention. In 2021, NHCN became a HUD-approved Housing Counseling Agency, reinforcing its commitment to high-quality, accountable services that support Native sovereignty and self-determination.

## NHCN 2025 Impact

- **14** member organizations
- **1,796** households served
- **474** households improved financial capacity
- **117** new homeowners

In 2025, NHCN continued to provide consistent support to members through **monthly peer calls, office hours, and focused working sessions**, including a **HUD Certification Study Group**. These spaces allowed practitioners to share updates, address challenges, and exchange best practices related to HUD certification, mid-year reporting, and program delivery, including VITA services. Focus groups and targeted discussions created opportunities to troubleshoot common issues and strengthen alignment across the network. **In June, members also gathered in person for the annual NHCN Summit** in Redmond, Oregon, creating space for deeper learning, relationship-building, and shared reflection on successes and challenges across the field.

Through these combined efforts, NHCN continues to strengthen coordination, build practitioner knowledge, and support housing counseling services that respond to the needs of Native communities.



2025 Native Housing Counseling Network Summit, Redmond, Oregon

# Powering Change Through Partnership

Oweesta's outward partnerships are a critical extension of our work—and a key strategic priority—strengthening the broader ecosystem of economic empowerment by connecting Native communities to national networks, resources, and influence. Through strategic engagement with **Partners for Rural Transformation (PRT)**, **NeighborWorks America**, **Opportunity Finance Network (OFN)**, the **Native CDFI Network (NCN)**, and others, Oweesta brings Native perspectives into national conversations, helping shape policy, capital strategies, and innovation that impact rural and Tribal communities.

At the same time, these partnerships bring back knowledge, tools, and opportunities that directly benefit Tribal Nations and Native CDFIs. Whether advancing coordinated strategies through PRT, expanding culturally grounded training with NeighborWorks America, or partnering with OFN to host Native Gathering Day at its annual conference, these collaborations strengthen both the field and the communities we serve—helping build a more connected ecosystem of economic empowerment grounded in the realities of Indian Country.

## Partners for Rural Transformation (PRT)

Oweesta is a partner in the Partners for Rural Transformation (PRT), a coalition of six leading Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) serving some of the nation's most historically underinvested rural communities. Together, PRT reaches nearly three-quarters of the country's persistent poverty counties, including Native communities, Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, the Deep South, the Rio Grande Valley, and the Rural West.

Participation in PRT extends Oweesta's commitment to strengthening Native economies and increasing investment in Tribal communities. The coalition brings together deeply rooted, community-based lenders that understand the realities, strengths, and opportunities within the communities they serve. Through this partnership, Oweesta helps ensure Native voices, Tribal priorities, and the experiences of Native CDFIs are represented in national conversations on rural development, capital access, policy, and economic opportunity.

Grounded in the belief that historically overlooked communities are rich in leadership, resilience, innovation, and community knowledge, PRT works to expand access to capital, strengthen local financing capacity, advocate for responsive federal policy, and shift national narratives about rural and Native communities — reinforcing that community-driven solutions create lasting impact.

As a founding member for more than eight years, Oweesta continues to play an active leadership role within the coalition, while staff participate in Communications, Fund Development, and Lending working groups that help move resources and opportunities into underserved communities.



## NeighborWorks America

NeighborWorks America is a national leader in advancing affordable housing and financial capability. As a long-standing NeighborWorks America network member, Oweesta partners to extend and adapt this work to better serve Native communities across Indian Country.

Together, we co-designed and delivered a culturally grounded training, **"Financial Education & Coaching in Native Communities,"** offered through the NeighborWorks Native American Track at NeighborWorks Training Institute in New Orleans in August of 2025. This partnership continues to grow through NeighborWorks' ongoing investment in Oweesta's Native CDFI Practitioner Certification Program—expanding access to high-quality training and strengthening the long-term capacity of Native-led institutions nationwide.

# Native Gathering Day at OFN Conference

The **20th Anniversary of Native Gathering Day** marked a historic milestone for Oweesta and the Native CDFI movement. Held in partnership with the Opportunity Finance Network (OFN) Conference—the premier event in the CDFI industry—this gathering represents far more than a convening. It is a dedicated space, sustained over two decades, where Native CDFIs come together to lead, shape, and define the future of the field.

For 20 years, Native Gathering Day has ensured that Native voices are not just included, but centered, at the national level. It is where Native CDFIs elevate their work, influence policy, share innovations in lending and development services, and advance strategies grounded in the



realities of Indian Country. In 2025, these conversations were brought to life through sessions such as **“Changing Landscape,”** which explored the future of the field amid shifting federal dynamics; discussions on **philanthropy and long-term capital strategies;** and a featured panel, **“NCFDI Partnership in Action,”** highlighting how participation lending and cross-sector collaboration are expanding access to capital and advancing energy sovereignty.

Rooted in strong Native participation since its inception, the gathering continues to serve as a consistent space for leadership, exchange, and collective direction.



In 2025, that legacy continued. Leaders from across Indian Country came together not only to reflect on how far the field has come, but to define where it is going—grounded in sovereignty, driven by community, and led by Native institutions.

At the OFN Conference, Oweesta joined Native and national partners to explore how coordinated advocacy advances community sovereignty in the panel discussion, **Changing the Landscape: Native Policy Leadership in Action.**

Leaders from Oweesta (**Robin Danner**, board chair), the Native CDFI Network (**Peter Upton**), National American Indian Housing Council (**Jacqueline Pata**), Opportunity Finance Network (**Dafina Williams**), and Partners for Rural Transformation (**Emily Burleson**) highlighted how unified advocacy, shared data, and cross-sector partnerships can elevate Native priorities in federal policy and rural development.

Together, reinforcing a clear message:  
**When Native institutions align, their collective voice drives systems change.**



# Native CDFI Capital Access Convening

## *Resilience. Abundance. Kōkua.*

May 13–15, 2025 • Waikoloa, Hawaii

In May 2025, Oweesta marked a milestone—hosting the **10th Annual Native CDFI Capital Access Convening (CAC) in Waikoloa, Hawai'i**. What began as a small gathering has grown into a cornerstone event for the Native CDFI industry, bringing together leaders to strengthen access to capital and advance self-determined economic futures. The convening drew **over 180 organizations**—including **67 Native CDFIs, 26 funders/investors, and 12 Tribal entities**—featured **55 sessions across 42 tracks**, and awarded **\$100,000 in travel stipends to 50 Native CDFIs and partners**, ensuring equitable participation, particularly from rural and remote communities.

Rooted in Indigenous values, the convening opened with each participant receiving braided sweetgrass from the continent and pa'akai (Hawaiian sea salt), symbolizing the connection between Native communities and Native Hawaiian partners. This intentional welcome embodied the theme—**Resilience. Abundance. Kōkua.**—and set the tone for the days ahead.

## Native Awards Gala & Fashion Show

A highlight of the convening, the **Native Awards Gala** brought together more than **450 attendees and guests** for an evening celebrating leadership, creativity, and community. The evening also featured Oweesta's first Native Fashion Show—an inspiring showcase of Indigenous design and artistry.

Designers shared powerful, culturally grounded work, while models brought each piece to life with presence and pride. Together, they created a dynamic expression of identity, storytelling, and sovereignty—reminding us that creativity is an essential part of economic and cultural resilience.

The night's awardees were announced by Oweesta's President & CEO, Chrystal Cornelius:

**Hoaloha (Friend) Award: Ann Whittemore** (Tamalpais Trust)

**Industry Achiever Awards:**

**George Moody** (Nimiipuu Community Development Fund)

**Julie Nolen** (Cook Inlet Lending Center)

**Frances Hosten** (CDFI of the Tohono O'odham Nation)



2025 Native CDFI Capital Access Convening Award Winners  
L to R: George Moody, Ann Whittemore, Chrystal Cornelius, Julie Nolen, and Frances Hosten



Native Awards Gala Fashion Show Model



In Memory of Twinkle Borge (1969–2024)  
A life of leadership, compassion, and unwavering  
commitment to community

Oweesta has had the profound privilege of building a relationship with Pu’uhonua O Wai’anae and the community it represents. Through site visits and time spent on the ground, our staff witnessed firsthand the strength, care, and leadership that define this place—and the vision that made it possible.

Pu’uhonua O Wai’anae is home to one of the largest communities of unhoused Native Hawaiian families. Today, more than 200 residents live within this permanent encampment—many of whom have no other option to remain on their own island due to the rising cost of living and the continued loss of access to their lands. What exists here is not temporary—it is a community built out of necessity, resilience, and the right to remain rooted in place.

At the center of this work was **Twinkle Borge**. A Native Hawaiian woman who experiences houselessness herself, Twinkle transformed that reality into action—creating a home for others where none existed. She did not wait for systems to respond; she built something better. Under her leadership, Pu’uhonua O Wai’anae became a powerful example of community-led solutions grounded in dignity, belonging, and collective care.

Oweesta’s team had the honor of standing alongside the community—supporting efforts to strengthen infrastructure, contributing to essential spaces like a donation pantry, and responding to on-the-ground needs. Through this work, we learned from a model that challenges conventional systems and redefines what is possible when communities lead. It deepened our respect for the strength and innovation already present, and for Twinkle’s leadership—grounded in action, humility, and an unshakable belief in her people.

In 2025, we lost Twinkle, but her legacy remains. It lives in the families she brought together, in the land she helped protect, and in the future she envisioned through projects like Mauka Village—creating permanent housing, food systems, and long-term stability for her community.


We are honored to have walked alongside her work. Twinkle’s leadership reminds us that true solutions come from within community, and her impact will continue to guide and inspire generations to come. **May she journey well.**



“Empowering. Motivational. Confidence. These are a few words to describe OWEESTA’s 10th Annual Capital Access Convening. This is not just recognizing these as good traits, but wrapping the whole conference with resilience, innovation, and resourcefulness that everyone has what it takes to navigate through all types of turmoil or disruption. The OWEESTA team and the speakers highlighted provided a path of unification, networking, and timely information.

And the gift of gathering on the Big Island of Hawaii provided a much-needed re-charge and connection to a special and unique community and culture that provided respite, healing, and happiness. From the music and fashion show to the petroglyph carvings and swimming with the manta rays, this CAC will be a joyful memory for many—for years to come.”

—Nancy Jordan, Pacific Northwest Tribal Lending

A photograph of two women in a cultural setting. The woman on the left is wearing a dark patterned shirt and has her head bowed. The woman on the right is wearing a bright blue shirt, has a yellow flower in her hair, and is smiling warmly. They are holding hands in a gesture of unity. The background is blurred, showing other people and tables.

**“A’ohe hana nui ke alu ‘ia.”**

**No task is too big when  
done together by all.**

CAC Day 1 closing session, ‘Cultural Tapestry: Weaving Community Through Tradition’

# Partner Successes

For generations, Native communities have sustained resonant economies rooted in culture, kinship, and sovereignty—despite being systematically excluded from mainstream financial systems and constrained by disinvestment, overregulation, and limited access to capital. In response, Native peoples have not waited for inclusion—they have built their own pathways.

At the center of this work are Native Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs): trusted, Native-led institutions expanding access to capital, delivering culturally grounded financial education, and advancing self-determined economic development.

## **Native CDFIs are not service providers—they are movement infrastructure.**

At Oweesta, we see Native CDFIs as the backbone of a broader movement for Indigenous economic sovereignty. Scaling this impact requires reimagining how capital flows into Indian Country—not as pipelines of extraction, but as waterways of reciprocity and regeneration.

For too long, capital has been structured to extract rather than circulate. Yet Native communities continue to demonstrate what is possible when resources are rooted locally—building strong, community-based institutions that generate lasting economic opportunity.

Oweesta was founded to help accelerate this vision. As the longest-standing Native CDFI intermediary in the nation, Oweesta provides loans, investments, training, technical assistance, research, and policy advocacy exclusively for Native CDFIs and Native communities.

## **When capital is community-controlled, it builds wealth, strengthens sovereignty, and ensures that prosperity is defined—and sustained—by Native communities themselves.**

*“I am so grateful for the process that WINLF helped me through to become a homeowner. No longer renting or living with family. I have been working on my credit since August of 2024. Went through credit counseling and homebuyer’s education, which was very helpful. I also increased my credit score; I was in the lower 600s, and as of December 2025, my score is 770. I now own my own home. I know how to take care of it; this is my biggest asset. I am showing my children how to be independent and work hard. This is for them. I would like to thank everyone at WINLF who helped me achieve this dream.”*

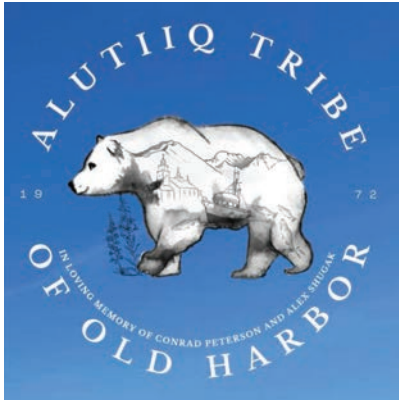
**—Alex C., Wisconsin Native Loan Fund, Inc. client**

*“Two years ago, she [Shiela] officially began her First-Time Homebuyer journey, cleaning up her credit, taking classes, and preparing with patience and intention. She waited with grace. She chose to support her daughter, Hopa, through her own homeownership journey first. And when it was finally Shiela’s turn, the right home did not rush her. It met her exactly where she was. When Shiela walked through the door, the entryway was covered in ladybugs, a symbol of her mother’s presence. Her daughter looked at her and said, “I think this is it?” And it was. Today, Shiela closed on her home, a moment years in the making, shaped by perseverance, love, and trust in the process. A reminder that steady steps, taken with heart and a community of support, lead us home.”*

**—Mni Sota Fund**

# Food Sovereignty in Action

## *Old Harbor (Nuniaq), Kodiak Island, Alaska*



Through Oweesta's partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we visited the Alutiiq Tribe of Old Harbor as part of the **Indigenous Animals Harvesting and Meat Processing Program**.

In this remote island community, subsistence traditions are central to culture, health, and survival. The Tribe is leading the **Nuniaq Processing Center**

**Project** to expand local harvesting, processing, and storage of traditional foods including fish, game, and bison within the community.

Building on the Sitkalidak Bison Herd, this project strengthens food access, creates local jobs, and reinforces long-term community resilience guided by culture, stewardship, and self-determination. The Nuniaq Processing Center stands as a powerful model of Indigenous-led solutions, cultural continuity, and sustainable community development.

Deep gratitude to the Old Harbor community for their generosity, leadership, and hospitality. Indigenous-led solutions like this are shaping sustainable futures for generations to come.



**Pictured L-R:** Ross and Allison, Alutiiq Tribal members and managers of the Nuniaq Processing Center project, with Oweesta CFO, Florence Ludka

# Blue Mountain Mill: A New Model for Indigenous Finance

Private business expansion to tribal business park on the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Oregon

Total project size: \$66.5M

Oweesta participation: \$3M

The Blue Mountain Mill project on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation shows what's possible when Indigenous leadership and collaboration come together.

Oweesta joined seven other Native Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and Mission Driven Finance in a **\$9 million loan package to help build a regenerative flour mill** operated by Cairnspring Mills. This pooled investment—known as a “**capital weave**”—created a pathway for Native lenders to participate in a deal of this scale while building collective strength across the industry.

The project restores critical milling capacity lost after a regional facility fire and creates more than 20 jobs. It also advances food sovereignty by strengthening local agriculture and expanding access to identity-preserved, regeneratively grown grain products.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation deepened this impact through a \$5 million equity investment and a long-term land lease, ensuring the project is rooted in community vision and stewardship.

Beyond financing, the mill represents a regional hub for regenerative agriculture and workforce development, with plans to partner with Blue Mountain Community College to train future employees.

This project reflects a powerful shift in what Indigenous finance can achieve—bringing together capital, community, and shared vision to build stronger, more resilient Tribal economies.



Above L–R: **Bill Tovey**, CTUIR Department of Economic & Community Development; **Pete Upton**, Native360 Loan Fund; **Jamie Olson**, Oweesta Corporation; **Josey Steeples**, Cairnspring Mills; **Jordan Ruiz**, Northwest Native Development Fund; **Kevin Morse**, Cairnspring Mills; **Cassandra Waters**, NNDF; **Ted Piccolo**, Mission Driven Finance; **Dave Tovey**, Nixyáawii Community Financial Services; **Elizabeth Ferguson**, NNDF; **Jonelle Yearout**, Nimiipuu Community Development Fund. (Photo courtesy of Mission Driven Finance)



Sharing during bread breaking ceremony

# Metlakatla Infrastructure: Advancing Sovereignty

Closing infrastructure gaps with Native-led financing for tribal utility in Metlakatla Indian Community in Alaska

Total project size: \$5.2M bridge loan & \$11M permanent financing

Oweesta participation: \$900,000 bridge & \$1.1M permanent financing

In 2025, Native-led financing helped bring a critical infrastructure project to completion in the Metlakatla Indian Community in Alaska—demonstrating the power of aligned capital to move community priorities forward.

In August, Native American Bank led a \$5.2 million bridge loan to Metlakatla Power and Light, unlocking the final phase of a submarine utility and fiber optic cable connecting the Annette Island Reserve to the Ketchikan Public Utilities grid. The project also secured \$11 million in permanent financing, ensuring long-term sustainability. **Oweesta played a key role in this effort, participating with \$900,000 in bridge financing and \$1.1 million in permanent financing.**

This timely investment allowed the Tribal utility to overcome rising construction costs and complete the intertie—stabilizing long-term energy delivery and enabling the integration of hydroelectric and wind power. The project also expands broadband access and is expected to reduce electricity costs by approximately \$150,000 annually.

More than a single project, this work reflects a broader shift: Native-led institutions are closing persistent infrastructure gaps with solutions grounded in sovereignty, resilience, and community vision. In Metlakatla, that vision is now realized in reliable energy, expanded digital access, and strengthened self-determination—illustrating what’s possible when Native communities have access to capital on their own terms.



Metlakatla Community photos, including the intertie

# Aligned Capital. Proven Impact.

## What Our Investors Are Saying

*“When **Tamalpais Trust** first embarked on our Community Investments Program in 2015, we turned to Oweesta for advice and assistance. From the beginning, Oweesta’s expertise, ethics, and leadership helped guide our investment strategy. The more we learned about the strength of Native CDFIs and their significant role in bringing access to capital to Indigenous communities, the more we were convinced that Native CDFIs should be the primary focus of our program.*”

*Since then, Native CDFIs have expanded in number and size, Oweesta has grown tremendously, and Tam Trust’s Community Investment Program has reached over \$20M in investments amongst 50 NCDFIs across the country.”*

**How did Oweesta make this possible for Tamalpais Trust?** *They brought us in by guiding us through their processes and consistently reinforcing the essential role Native CDFIs play in community development. They introduced us to partner NCDFIs, identified those with both the capacity and the need for capitalization, and helped us invest with confidence. (In fact, we have a full 100% loan repayment rate to date!)*

*Oweesta even partnered with Tam Trust to develop a Direct Investment Vehicle designed to streamline the investment process for us (and other funders), as well as to create the new Small and Emerging NCDFI loan program - also available to other funders. We could not have built our Community Investment Program without the vital intermediary services provided by Oweesta.*

*Throughout, Oweesta has centered Native sovereignty, and has emphasized access to capital as a critical bridge to financial security—one that helps alleviate persistent poverty while closing generational wealth gaps for Indigenous community members.*

*We at Tamalpais Trust are proud to contribute to the flow of capital in Indigenous Communities. We are deeply grateful to Oweesta for their powerful work, for enhancing our effectiveness as a funder, and for their innovation, leadership, and partnership in an increasingly important field.”*

—Ann Whittemore  
Director of Community Investments  
Tamalpais Trust



---

*“For over 25 years, Oweesta has empowered Native communities through capital and innovation. The clients of **Reynders, McVeigh Capital Management** are grateful to have had the opportunity to invest and partner with Oweesta via their Loan Fund. We have seen how Oweesta’s work has grown and scaled to impact more native communities across the United States. We remain inspired by their leadership in creating jobs, financing small businesses, and assisting new homeowners.”*

---

*“Oweesta is one of the first investments we make with **Chordata** Clients. We know we live on stolen land and that part of investing in racial justice is moving money to Native-led economic sovereignty. Our clients care about repairing the harms of wealth accumulation in this country, and our clients love the opportunity to support Oweesta’s work and do so without charging interest by making 0% loans.”*

# Portfolio Partners

## Akiptan

Bay Bancorporation  
Berkeley Park Montessori, LLC  
*(Native American Bank participation loan)*  
Chehalis Tribal Loan Fund  
Chi Ishobak, Inc.  
Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation  
Cook Inlet Lending Center, Inc.  
Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement  
First American Capital Corporation, Inc.  
First Nations Community Financial  
Five Rivers Loan Fund, Inc.  
Four Bands Community Fund  
Four Directions Development Corporation  
Grandview Bankshares, Inc.  
Haa Yakaawu Financial Corporation  
Hawaii Community Lending  
Hawaiian Lending & Investments  
Homestead Community Development Corporation  
Hopi Credit Association  
Indian Land Capital Company, LLC  
Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians  
*(Bay Bank/Native American Bank participation loan)*  
Leech Lake Financial Services, Inc.  
Mazaska Owecaso Otipi Financial, Inc.  
Metlakatla Power & Light *(Native American Bank participation loan)*

## Mni Sota Fund

NACDC Financial Services, Inc.  
Native American Bank  
Native American Development Center  
Native360 Loan Fund, Inc.  
Nimiipuu Community Development Fund  
Nixyaawii Community Financial Services  
Northern Shores Community Development, Inc.  
Northwest Mills and Specialty Grains SPC dba Cairnspring Mills  
*(Mission Driven Finance participation loan)*  
Northwest Native Development Fund  
Pacific Northwest Tribal Lending  
Pakini Loan Fund  
Pawnee Nation Mental Health, LLC  
*(Native American Bank participation loan)*  
Pit River Health Services *(Native American Bank participation loan)*  
Seneca Nation of Indians Economic Development Council  
Spruce Root, Inc.  
Taala Fund  
The Lakota Funds, Inc.  
The Peoples Partners for Community Development  
Tiwa Lending Services  
Westwater Financial, Inc.  
White Earth Investment Initiative  
Wind River Development Fund  
Wisconsin Native Loan Fund, Inc.

# Audited Financial Statements

Oweesta's financial statements reflect how resources are stewarded to support Native-led solutions and strengthen community-driven development. This section provides a snapshot of our commitment to transparency, accountability, and long-term impact.

Condensed Statement of Financial Position		
	2025	2024
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash and Investments	56,868,493	36,177,151
Loans Receivable (Net of Allowance)	58,007,609	56,841,204
Other Assets	2,874,106	5,907,049
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>117,750,208</b>	<b>98,925,404</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Notes Payable	77,017,032	67,214,907
Other Liabilities	5,594,895	4,552,481
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>82,611,927</b>	<b>71,767,388</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Without Donor Restriction	31,286,796	22,985,293
With Donor Restriction	3,851,485	4,172,723
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>35,138,281</b>	<b>27,158,016</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>117,750,208</b>	<b>98,925,404</b>

Statement of Activities-Operations		
	2025	2024
<b>OPERATING REVENUE</b>		
Earned Revenue	2,025,021	2,353,972
Grants and Contributions	17,362,812	14,033,993
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>19,387,833</b>	<b>16,387,965</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>		
Capacity Building	5,564,963	3,906,170
Lending	1,239,417	1,104,569
Administration	1,702,775	1,463,289
Development	438,341	377,681
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>8,945,496</b>	<b>6,851,709</b>
<b>NON OPERATING EXPENSES</b>		
Subgrants to Others	2,140,834	5,454,298
<b>Total Non Operating Expenses</b>	<b>2,140,834</b>	<b>5,454,298</b>
<b>Change In Net Assets</b>	<b>8,301,503</b>	<b>4,081,958</b>

Audited financial statements for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

**These financials reflect continued growth in Native-led capital deployment and organizational capacity.**



*The future of Native economies is not hypothetical. It is being built now,  
by Native institutions, with the right capital behind them.*

---

**Redefining Equity. Reclaiming Native Sovereignty. Together.**