

**ONAC Remarks for HHS Region 1 Tribal Quarterly Meeting
and Child Tax Credit Discussion
October 28, 2021**

Greetings! My name is Christy Finsel. I am a citizen of the Osage Nation of Oklahoma and the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc., also known as ONAC. We appreciate the opportunity to join you today.

ONAC is celebrating its 20th anniversary as a Native-led asset building coalition. While ONAC has kept its name, we have been serving in a national capacity since 2018.

ONAC wears several different hats as a nonprofit. In relation to tribal child tax credit outreach, Patsy Schramm (Cherokee), of ONAC, coordinates the national Native Earned Income Tax Credit/Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Network. Through that Network, ONAC provides resources to Native VITA practitioners around the country to try to help them in their work. Patsy, representing ONAC, serves on the national Taxpayer Opportunity Network Steering Committee. Through the Native EITC/VITA Network, ONAC has been distributing information related to Child Tax Credit outreach. We invite you to join the national Native EITC/VITA Network.

ONAC also coordinates the national Native Bank On initiative, and the related *Get Banked Indian Country* campaign. Karen Edwards, who is enrolled Choctaw and my predecessor at ONAC, is our Coordinator of the Native Bank On ONAC initiative. ONAC is concerned about the 50.5% unbanked and underbanked rate in Indian Country. We are working on connecting tribal citizens to safe and affordable bank accounts. This effort is necessary, in general, but also specifically when working on Child Tax Credit outreach. Bank On accounts are nationally certified accounts that have low monthly fees and no overdraft fees. For the past 2.5 years, we have been meeting with various financial institutions, especially those serving tribal communities, to ask them to consider certifying one of their checking accounts as a Bank On certified account. We then have been connecting tribal citizens to those Bank On accounts, and providing incentive funding for those opening the accounts, as we have had the resources to do so. Earlier in the pandemic, we generated national handouts about how to claim federal Economic Impact Payments and linked that information to Bank On outreach efforts. During the past few months, as an extension of the Bank On efforts, we have launched a national *Get Banked Indian Country* campaign with messaging directed at unbanked and underbanked tribal citizens.

Effective messaging seems to work around noting the FDIC statistic about underbanked and unbanked numbers (50.5%); specific information about Bank On account features and links to a map for local banking options, as well as a link to the FDIC financial institution search tool; features to look for when opening a savings or checking account; how to claim Child tax credit payments and information about the GetCTC.org portal; and what to do if you want to receive the CTC by direct deposit. Some of our Native nonprofit and tribal partners are publishing CTC information and links to Get CTC.org on their website and social media, distributing flyers and printed materials explaining the CTC, and publishing and/or broadcasting public service

announcements or advertisements directing individuals and families to check their eligibility online or by calling their VITA programs for assistance.

ONAC's other work related to CTC outreach is that we are a direct service provider. We seed fund Children's Savings Accounts, emergency savings accounts, emergency cash assistance during the pandemic, provide nationally available financial coaching to any American Indian and Alaska Native in the country by phone and teleconference, resources for Native women entrepreneurs, and will soon be launching down payment assistance. In all these programs, we are providing information about accessing safe and affordable bank accounts. We are also sending information to those Native families we serve about claiming CTC.

ONAC has an email distribution list of 1,500 constituents. The list includes tribal leaders, tribal program directors, financial institutions, federal partners, researchers, funders, etc. We have sent them all the Bank On and CTC outreach materials. We also worked with Code for America to co-host a training for those interested in being navigators for GetCTC.org and then sent the recording of the training and a handout we generated which links banking access and claiming the CTC. ONAC has a unique GetCTC.org URL and we are also recommending that tribes and other Native-led nonprofits request their own unique URLs from Code for America to track their CTC outreach.

Finally, ONAC is also an intermediary funder. We have made grant awards to several Native VITA programs during the past few years. This month, we received funding from Share Our Strength to provide grant awards to nine tribes and Native-led nonprofits that are administering VITA programs to help support their current CTC outreach and then their efforts to prepare returns, in 2022, for those that miss the November 15th deadline to claim their CTC through the GetCTC.org portal. The nine Native VITA grantees are located in Maine, Arizona, Alaska, Minnesota, Texas, Oklahoma, Montana, and South Dakota. Related to HHS Region 1, the grantee in Maine is the Four Directions Development Corporation, a Native CDFI that administers a VITA program serving tribal citizens in Maine.

We have provided slides that include links to all the materials mentioned today. Contact information is included in the slides. If you have any questions, or wish to speak further, please let me know. We appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today.