

News Release

National American Indian Housing Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Native Financial Coalition Briefing Shows Education Importance; NAIHC Continues to Provide Crucial Training for Tribes

WASHINGTON—April 27, 2006—Native organizations are gathering on Capitol Hill today for a Policy Briefing on the importance of Financial Literacy and Education in Indian Country. The Native Financial Education Coalition (NFEC) is hosting “**Bridging the Gap: Improving Native Communities through Financial Literacy and Education.**” The **National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC)**, a member of NFEC, is also committed to financial literacy. NAIHC participates in financial literacy and homeownership planning with its *Pathways Home: A Native Homeownership Guide* training and other financial literacy-related seminars.

During the briefing, which is hosted by NFEC in cooperation with **First Nations Oweesta Corporation, First Nations Development Institute, the National Congress of American Indians**, and NAIHC, NFEC will release policy recommendations on financial education services, youth financial education, Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and predatory lending that shows the links between homeownership and financial literacy education. The Native American homeownership rate is estimated to be as low as **33%, lowest among all ethnic groups** and less than half the rate for the general U.S. population (Government Accounting Office). However, lending in Indian Country is improving and it is more important than ever that tribal members have financial literacy education.

Pathways Home an Important Financial Literacy Tool

NAIHC’s *Pathways Home* teaches housing authority counselors how to instruct tribal members on managing a budget, establishing a savings account, and dealing with credit issues. “*Pathways* is an important tool in financial literacy training,” **NAIHC Chairman Chester Carl** said. “Native Americans are increasingly having the resources available to purchase a home, but may need to increase their knowledge of the banking process. This training also helps defend against predatory lending to tribal members.”

In addition, NAIHC hosts a “Planning for Homeownership” Seminar and incorporates training on IDAs, Earned Income Tax credits, and other financial literacy tools into its conferences. “Through NAIHC’s trainings, Indian Housing Authorities gain a greater knowledge about all aspects of mortgage financing and financial literacy and learn how to instruct their tribal members to become successful homeowners,” said **NAIHC Executive Director Gary Gordon**.

Barbara Roloff, the housing director for the **Umatilla Reservation Housing Authorities** (an NAIHC member), is speaking at the NFEC event. “Financial literacy is the first step in ensuring that our tribal members have the tools they need to access quality mortgage products,” Roloff said. “This is an exciting time, and NAIHC along with its partners in NFEC, have taken on the challenge of assisting tribal members play catch-up in the mortgage and financial literacy arena. Our homeownership program specialists graduated from *Pathways* and can say that it is a tremendously effective seminar and that NAIHC has aided in our financial literacy outreach.”

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The National American Indian Housing Council assists tribes and tribal housing entities in reaching their self-determined goals of providing culturally relevant, decent, safe, sanitary, and quality affordable housing for Native people in Indian communities and Alaska Native villages. (www.naihc.net)