



**NFEC** NATIVE  
FINANCIAL  
EDUCATION  
COALITION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Financial Education Crucial for Building Stronger Native Communities**

The Native Financial Education Coalition (NFEC), a group of local, regional, and national organizations and government agencies working to promote financial education in Native communities, will host a Policy Briefing on Thursday, April 28 at 10:00 a.m. in the Senate Indian Affairs Hearing Room (Senate Russell Building, Room 485).

The briefing, held in conjunction with Financial Literacy Month as designated by Congress, will include tribal leaders, congressional members and staff, federal agency officials, representatives from Native organizations, and NFEC members.

Elsie Meeks, Executive Director of the First Nations Oweesta Corporation and Chair of the Native Financial Education Coalition, said Native communities have traditionally been underserved by the financial services industry and are frequently targeted by predatory lenders and tax preparers. She said limited financial expertise and inadequate financial education resources have significantly hindered the economic health of Native communities.

“Sometimes, we as tribal members and even tribal governments think the way out of our financial situations is to come up with great and grand initiatives,” Meeks said. “When, in fact, if we just learned to make smarter choices about budgeting and credit, we would be much better off.”

NCAI Executive Director Jacqueline Johnson said financial education can help promote financial responsibility and accountability, which leads to stronger self-governance at the individual and tribal level.

“Good, sound financial education is one of the most important strategies for improving access to capital and financial services in Indian Country,” Johnson said. “Investing those critical dollars in our communities and our people will propel stronger tribal economies and governments.”

NFEC will release a “Policy Brief” at Thursday’s briefing which makes recommendations to tribal, federal and state policy makers in the areas of basic financial education, youth financial education, Community Development Financial Institutions, Individual Development Accounts, homeownership, entrepreneurship and Earned Income Tax Credits.

Scheduled speakers include:

- **Elsie Meeks**, Chair, Native Financial Education Coalition and Executive Director, First Nations Oweesta Corporation
- **Jacqueline L. Johnson**, Executive Director of National Congress of American Indians
- **Dan Iannicola**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Education, U.S. Department of the Treasury
- **Margaret Nilson**, Manager, Financial and Special Initiatives, Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Fund
- **Luke Toyebo**, Director for Field Services, National American Indian Housing Council
- **James Dennis**, Tax Counsel, Office of Senator Bingaman
- **Cecelia Fire Thunder**, President, Oglala Lakota Nation