



**NAC**  
CREATING AND SHARING STRATEGIES FOR  
ASSET BUILDING IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. (ONAC) works to increase the numbers of Native asset building programs in the state. Programs range from financial education to credit counseling, foreclosure prevention, Children's Savings Accounts, Individual Development Account, family emergency savings accounts, etc.

2015 marks an important year for ONAC. Though ONAC has existed for the last fourteen years as a coalition, until last year, we were housed under other nonprofits. In February 2014, the IRS approved ONAC as a tax exempt organization, 501(c)(3). In the last year, ONAC has put in place the systems for a healthy nonprofit. We have received Gold level status for the nonprofit data we have shared on our GuideStar profile. ONAC received confirmation of grant funding to help us grow the coalition (\$352,482 in committed funding in 2015). This funding has allowed us to prepare Children's Savings Account programmatic materials, fund three more mini grants, and provide asset building professional development resources to our constituents. ONAC has a strong base of over 700 individual constituents and friends that we communicate with via our email distribution list. As there is so much potential for Native asset building program development and collaboration, we are working diligently to reach out to more tribal program directors and tribal leaders to share with them what ONAC has to offer.

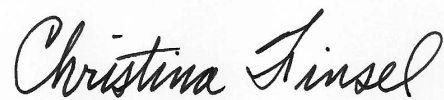
ONAC believes that when the tribes in Oklahoma work collectively to strengthen their Native asset building resources, through sharing information with their peers about their asset building model development and best practices, Native citizens throughout the state have more access to the skills and programmatic resources they need to build their assets throughout their life span. There are many innovations occurring with Native-administered asset building programs, and documenting these efforts, for replication, can benefit not only Native people, but also non-Native citizens at local, state, and national levels. ONAC provides a unifying force and platform for this information exchange to take place to help seed ideas, connect needs to financial resources, and bring Native voices to the national asset building table. ONAC does this through hosting an annual conference where our constituents build their

capacity by speaking about their projects; presenting at state, regional, and national conferences about the coalition and what is working well with Native asset building programs; requesting administrative policy guidance from federal programs to clear barriers for Native asset building implementation (such as from Tribal TANF); acting as an intermediary funder of mini grants, and providing free technical assistance to applicants who may never have written a grant application before, as well as to grantees for program design and implementation (from 2014 through 2015, ONAC funded seven mini grantees in Oklahoma with a total of \$24,500); conducting asset limit research; participating in various state and federal asset building advisory groups; and administering a Children's Savings Account (CSA) program. We find that there is increasing interest in this coalition and need for the resources ONAC provides Native communities and others working with us.

To continue this work, ONAC has implemented a multi-pronged fundraising approach. We are grateful to the tribes, foundations, Native nonprofits, individual donors, and members who have supported us thus far. As this work is specialized, and asset building coalitions are not always easy to fund, we will continue to need to grow our base and introduce others to ONAC's work and the benefits it provides.

Thank you for your support. We are excited about the future of Native asset building. Given the asset stripping that has occurred in Indian Country and the poverty and income volatility that our families are experiencing, these asset building resources are needed. We are working to provide culturally-relevant asset building programs. ONAC wishes to collaborate with you to try to better meet the demand for these services.

Sincerely,



Christina Finsel (Osage)  
Executive Director

## FROM THE BOARD VICE-PRESIDENT

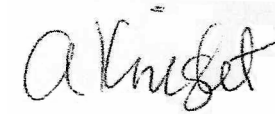
I firmly believe asset building is the way to build wealth in families, especially those experiencing generational poverty. With organizations such as ONAC, you can meet other asset-building practitioners, get new ideas, and take lessons learned home to enhance your tribal asset building programs. Over the last fourteen years, I have been attending ONAC meetings and have served as a member of the ONAC leadership. By participating in ONAC, I have continued to learn about asset building from others in the state. In turn, I have shared about the Cherokee Nations' asset building programming efforts, such as with our Voluntary Income Tax Assistance, matched savings account, financial education, entrepreneurship, and credit builder programs.

ONAC has come a long way in the past several years especially after we had the funds to support an Executive Director at least half time. My hopes for ONAC going forward are that more Native people in Oklahoma understand about asset building and how they could enhance asset-building efforts in their tribe. Additionally, I hope ONAC is able to secure sustainable funding streams, as this coalition plays a crucial role in tribal asset development. ONAC has funded seven mini grants since 2014. We would like to increase the numbers of grants offered to help more tribes and Native nonprofits get their asset projects off the ground.

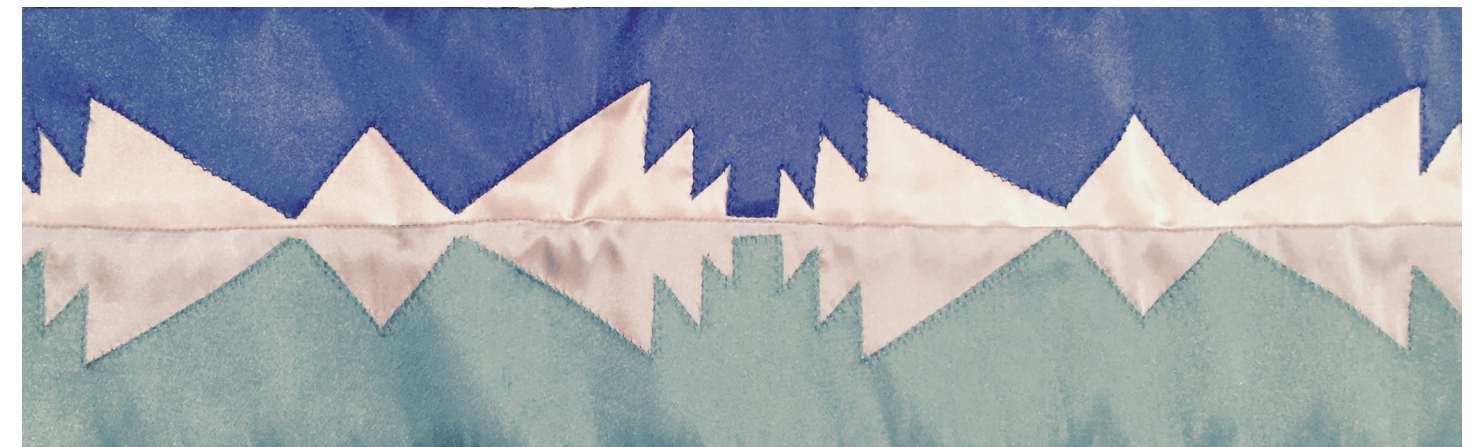
I am so pleased that ONAC is offering Children's Savings Accounts. I think such programming for children is where we get our biggest return on our dollars and where we have the most impact. Asset building for children will allow us break generational poverty and help our youth to have what they need to flourish.

I am honored to serve as the ONAC Board Vice President. We appreciate the support that tribes, Native nonprofits, and other partners have shown ONAC. The coalition wishes to continue to expand our reach and help our constituents take advantage of the coalition's resources. The sky is the limit on how we, together, can build assets in our tribal communities.

Sincerely,



Anna Knight (Cherokee)  
Commerce Group Leader  
Cherokee Nation Commerce Group





## WHO WE ARE

The Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition (ONAC) is an American Indian-led nonprofit network of Native people who are dedicated to increasing self-sufficiency and prosperity in their communities.

ONAC serves representatives of tribes and Native nonprofits by designing and implementing asset-building programs such as Children's Savings Accounts, Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), family emergency savings accounts, and financial literacy programs.

These asset building programs often simultaneously address family economic security, food sovereignty, financial literacy, and revitalization of Native language and arts. ONAC believes strongly in the importance of creating programming that incorporates tribal customs, traditions, and language into asset building efforts.

ONAC is one of only a handful of Native asset building coalitions in operation within the United States. Coalitions such as ONAC provide Native community leaders, in both urban and rural areas, with specialized expertise to assist them in the creation of culturally relevant and community-centric programming that addresses intergenerational poverty with a focus on traditional Native beliefs regarding asset building.

## HISTORY

In 2001, a meeting organized by the Center for Social Development (CSD) at Washington University in St. Louis and First Nations Development Institute was held to determine interest in the development of an intertribal consortium or coalition of tribes having initiated (or about to initiate) asset-building programs. From 2001 until 2006, Karen Edwards (Choctaw), a Project Director at the CSD, continued working with several Native asset-building practitioners in Oklahoma to build the base for the coalition. They conducted outreach and meetings. During this time, CSD and First Nations Development Institute, both classified as tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, financially supported ONAC. By 2006, ONAC was a project of First Nations Development Institute and they paid Karen Edwards, as a consultant once she retired from CSD, to be the project manager for ONAC.

In 2007, a group of tribal representatives met (at the Cherokee Casino and Resort in Tulsa) and agreed to become an organized Native-focused asset-building group, along the lines of those developed in some other states. ONAC remained a project of First Nations Development Institute until 2014 when the coalition was approved as a tax exempt organization.

As of 2015, while our focus is on serving Oklahoma tribes and Native nonprofits, we are now working on a national level with our participation in asset building advisory groups and requests for administrative policy guidance at the federal level.

## PROGRAMS

The coalition provides three programs:

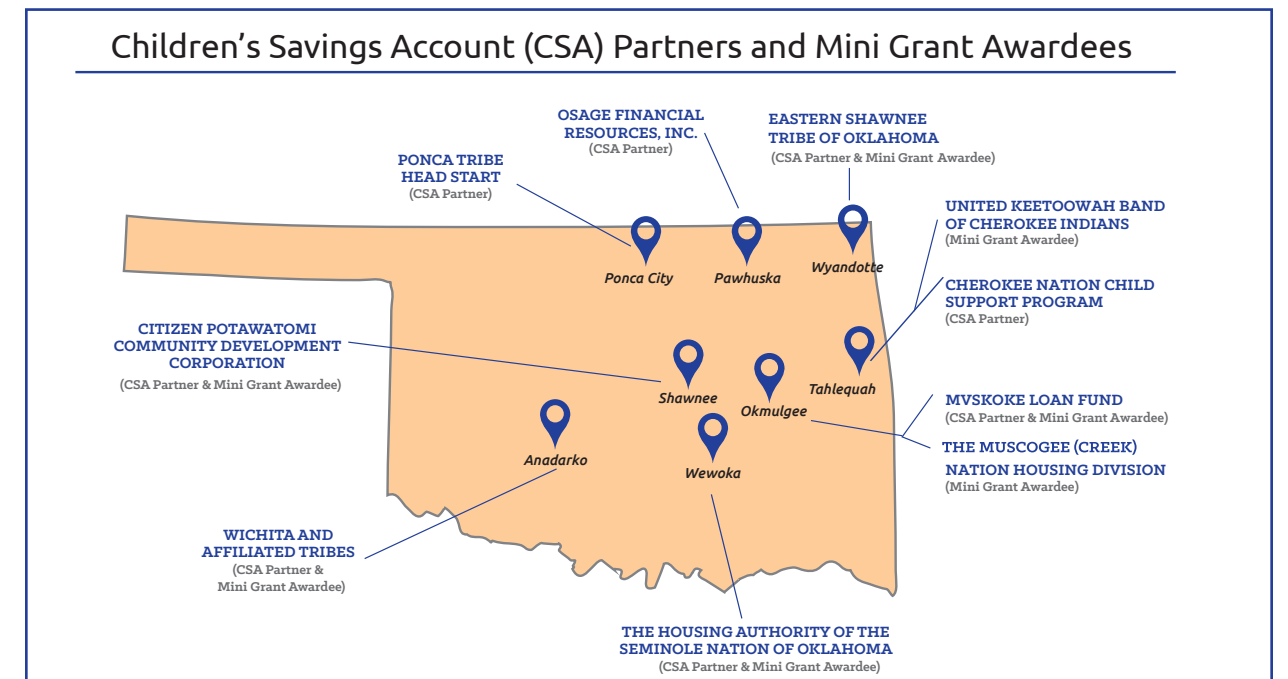
- 1 Children's Savings Accounts, CSAs (opening and funding CSAs for Native youth to help them build a nest egg of savings, we have seven tribal and Native nonprofit partners and documented need for more than the 600 accounts we currently have funding to open)
- 2 Grants for Native asset builders (mini grants and larger grants to fund various asset building programs, we have grant administration systems in place, provide technical assistance to grantees, and have awarded seven grants, since 2014, to tribes and Native nonprofits in Oklahoma)
- 3 Professional development for Native asset builders and program building (planning and hosting our annual conference; offering free technical assistance to our constituents as they design and implement asset building programs; submitting administrative policy guidance requests; conducting evaluation of asset building programs; and participating in state and national advisory groups related to tax policy, women and wealth, child support, and racial equity)



Natalie Christie, received the Award of Excellence for outstanding participation in the "Save and Secure Financial Literacy Program" offered by the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma (UKB). Presenting the award to Christie is UKB Education Intake Specialist, Della Wolfe. Photo by Sammy Still

## MISSION

ONAC's mission is to build and support a network of Native people who are dedicated to increasing self-sufficiency and prosperity in their communities through asset-building strategies.





## 2015 HIGHLIGHTS

■ Several VITA sites have closed in Oklahoma – making our participation in MyFreeTaxes a needed resource for those served by the Choctaw Asset Builders and other tribal programs in the state. ONAC signed a remote FSA form for the IRS to note our participation in MyFreeTaxes.com. We received a list of Oklahoma VITA and AARP tax sites from IRS-SPEC and posted this information on our website. We also sent out an email to over 700 constituents and friends with this same information.

■ ONAC attended a White House Convening, Creating Opportunity for Native Youth, on April 8, 2015. During a breakout session facilitated by Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior, attendees were invited to introduce themselves and their work. We shared information about ONAC and the value of partnerships between Native asset building coalitions and federal departments.

■ In June 2015, ONAC was awarded a W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant for \$200,000. This funding provides mini grants for family emergency savings accounts and 270 Children's Savings Accounts. The Children's Savings Account partners include the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Anadarko), Osage Financial Resources, Inc. (Pawhuska), Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation (Shawnee), Cherokee Nation Child Support Program (Tahlequah), Mvskoke Loan Fund (Okmulgee), Ponca Tribe Head Start (Ponca City), and the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma (Wyandotte). For the family emergency savings accounts, ONAC will offer a Request For Proposals (RFP) to fund a total of six family emergency savings accounts programs over the next three years.

■ In June 2015, First Nations Development Institute awarded ONAC a Native Youth and Culture Fund award (\$17,482) to fund 80 Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs) with ONAC constituent partners (Osage Financial Resources, Inc, Mvskoke Loan Fund, and the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma). We prepared the materials and plan to open the accounts in 2016.

■ In June 2015, ONAC was awarded a \$15,000 grant from First Nations Development Institute to fund administration costs.

■ In July 2015, ONAC was awarded \$120,000 from First Nations Development Institute, with support of the Ford Foundation, to fund our three programs, as well as fundraising and administration costs.

■ In July 2015, ONAC hosted our annual conference (sixty-eighty registered and sixty-one attended). AARP Oklahoma provided conference sponsorship. Twenty-three constituents spoke at the conference to share their asset building innovations. We provide such opportunities to build the capacity of Native asset builders and supporters.



■ As of August 2015, the first four ONAC mini grantees completed their projects (the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Housing Division, Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, and the Housing Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma). With the use of their grant funds (\$3,500 each), the grantees grew their own capacity to continue providing asset building programs for their citizens. Through their projects, the grantees reached a minimum of 179 tribal citizens. While this impact was immediate and impressive, ONAC anticipates that the positive effects of these initiatives will continue into the future. In the case of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Housing Division and the Housing

Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, their efforts to further educate tribal members about foreclosure prevention or credit and budgeting will likely continue to ripple out into their communities as family members share their learning with each other and know how to access the varied services of their housing authorities. The longer-term impacts of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes' work to teach youth about their culture, history, and good health practices, as well as to open savings accounts with them, will likely help the youth and their families to be more comfortable connecting to mainstream financial services, save for their future, and continue to develop a strong tribal identity. The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians' project also helped youth to connect to mainstream financial services through the opening of a bank account, as well as provided youth with the opportunity to develop their employment skills and increase their financial literacy. We believe these investments in tribal citizens will strengthen these nations.

### Grantee Projects and Outcomes:

▲ **The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Housing Division** held three foreclosure prevention classes for twenty-four citizens. Ms. Laura Frossard, of Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, was the featured speaker. One of the classes was videotaped (with permission) and will be used as a training tool for Housing Services staff to become more aware of the resources available to their citizens. A computer and supplies were purchased for credit checks and a printer was provided by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Department of Housing. The computer has been a great resource for applicants, those considering the mortgage assistance program, and those learning to read their credit report. The Department of Housing set up an informational booth at a March Madness basketball tournament for high school students. Foreclosure prevention information was distributed to forty individuals, all over 18 years of age. These efforts helped citizens to be more aware of the resources available to them so that they do not wait too long before they seek help to prevent foreclosure on their homes (awarded \$3,500).

▲ **Wichita and Affiliated Tribes** administered a Wichita SummerSmart Youth Program where, in addition to building tribal pride through teaching Wichita history and culture and promoting good health practices, they offered savings accounts for the interns and youth participants as

well as financial education classes. During the program, with the grant funds, they opened twenty-seven Children's Savings Accounts (including four accounts for their youth interns). During the program, the children learned about tribal presidents, aboriginal homelands of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, traditional foods such as corn, and their language. They were introduced to a wide variety of physical activities such as dodgeball, kickball, and other sports. They were also provided nutrition classes by their Food Distribution staff. A banker came and discussed with them the importance of saving money and the children noted the things they would like to save for in the future. Wichita and Affiliated Tribes President, Terri Parton, also held a discussion with the youth to reemphasize the importance of saving for things that they wanted and needed (awarded \$3,500).

▲ **The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians** offered a youth employment and financial education program where they required that the participants save earnings in a savings account. During this program, eight participants received information about ONAC, completed online financial education training, and developed an action plan for saving. Students learned about savings, interest, credit scores, and the importance of saving and budgeting. Students were placed at work sites, in their community, and paid to complete twenty hours of service. The students then deposited their earnings into a savings account established through this program. The participants completed their work hours at the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians Library and the Cherokee Nation Heritage Center. They also worked as helpers during community events and as elder assistants. The year-long program ended with a ceremony held in honor of the participants at the George Wickliffe Education Center (awarded \$3,500).

▲ **The Housing Authority of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma** continued to build internal staff capacity by sending a staff member to participate in the Native American Credit Counseling Program, provided by Rural Dynamics, Inc., in Great Falls, Montana. They also worked with a colleague, Kyra Childress, from the Chickasaw Nation Housing Authority, to hold five credit counseling and budgeting classes for their clients during the year. Eighty clients attended their classes (awarded \$3,500).



## 2015 HIGHLIGHTS *(continued)*



*Wichita and Affiliated Tribes President, Terri Parton, met with tribal youth at First State Bank, in Anadarko, and encouraged them to save in their ONAC-funded Children's Savings Accounts. From left-to-right, the proud account holders are (standing): Mekhi Williams, Kareriss Williams, Kevin Marquez, Jenny Marquez, James Marquez, (seated): Kayden Passi, Maleah Passi, Koby Williams, and Jalen Passi.*

*Photo acknowledgment: Wichita Tribal Newsletter*

■ Throughout 2015, ONAC provided free technical assistance to five of the Children's Savings Account (CSA) partners and mini grantees.

■ ONAC prepared a Native-specific financial education booklet, ordered piggy banks, designed a certificate for the Children's Savings Account (CSA) participants to celebrate their accounts, prepared ONAC CSA forms, Frequently Asked Question handouts, and letters to parents. These materials were then ready to be customized per Children's Savings Account partner.

■ ONAC worked with Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support Services as they organized their internal practices and policies to roll out CSAs with their families. They were the first CSA partner to open accounts, beginning in December 2015. ONAC customized forms for them, spoke with BancFirst, and printed and sent them the forms and application materials needed to open the accounts. As part of our CSA campaign over the past several years, ONAC has worked with child support contacts to tease out alternatives to forgiveness of state assigned child support arrears. Currently, forgiveness of state assigned child support arrears is not allowed in Oklahoma. With the Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support Services, we have arrived at an alternative option that tribally-administered child support programs may want to offer their clients. To add extra incentive for parents served by the Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support Services to deposit funds in the accounts, they will offer the custodial and non-custodial parents, who have established cases, an offer for private mediation. If both parties are willing, and the non-custodial

parent owes a custodial parent money, in order to work a good obligation, the non-custodial parent may deposit money into the CSA for the benefit of their child. This reduces the non-custodial parent's debt, and helps the child to have a bigger nest egg of savings. We hope that this ONAC CSA model, with an added debt reduction component, may be a model for other tribally-administered child support programs that wish to offer CSA programs.

■ With funding from FNDI, with support of the Ford Foundation, in November 2015, ONAC awarded three more mini grants to new partners:

▲ **The Mvskoke Loan Fund** will enroll one of their staff members in the credit counseling certification program offered by Rural Dynamics, Inc. The staff will then work with entrepreneurs to improve their credit rating and help prepare them to receive business loans (awarded \$3,500).

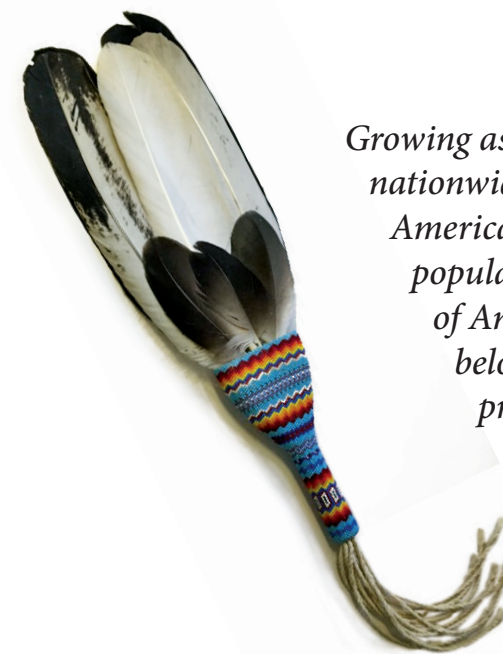
▲ **Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation (CPCDC)** will offer Shonya Mbwaka (Money Smart) to stimulate sustainable economic opportunity for the Citizen Potawatomi tribal community and all past and current clients. Through this project, the CPCDC will provide five workshops for a target of fifty people. The main topic will be investing, but they will also review the basic financial essentials. Participants will receive a plan developed for their situation in the form of workshops, individual credit sessions, and budgeting sessions (awarded \$3,500).

▲ **The Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma** will offer their tribal employees the opportunity to become more economically self-sufficient as they participate in Dave Ramsey's "Financial Peace University" classes. Through video teaching, class discussions, and interactive small group activities, this financial education program will present culturally-appropriate and practical steps toward economic self-sufficiency. Employees will be taught how to get rid of debt, manage money, spend and save wisely, and plan for retirement. Additionally, during this project, the tribe will provide youth financial education materials for the tribal employee's children. To incentivize class participation, the tribe will offer \$50.00 each, in opening deposit funds for a family emergency savings account, to twenty-four of the tribal employees who complete the financial education program (awarded \$3,500).

■ Our Executive Director prepared presentations for the First Nations Development Institute September 2015 LEAD Conference regarding ONAC's CSA campaign and our community engagement efforts. ONAC presented this information during two sessions at the LEAD Conference.

■ ONAC implemented a multi-pronged fundraising approach (grant funding, membership drive, end-of-year donation request, NativeGiving cohort, sponsorships).

■ The ONAC Executive Director served on the Northeastern Oklahoma Alliance for Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee, the Tax Alliance for Economic Mobility Advisory Committee, and the Oklahoma Child Support Financial Education Working Group.



*Growing assets in Native American communities is a critical need nationwide, including in Oklahoma. According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 16.9% of the overall population in Oklahoma was below the federal poverty level, 22.4% of American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) were at an income below poverty level. 77.5% of AI/ANs had an income in the previous 12 months that was at or below poverty level.*



## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

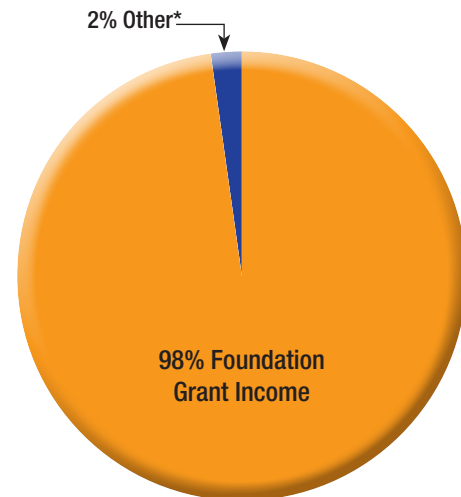
### Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. Statement of Activities For the Year Ended December 31, 2015

#### Revenues and Other Support

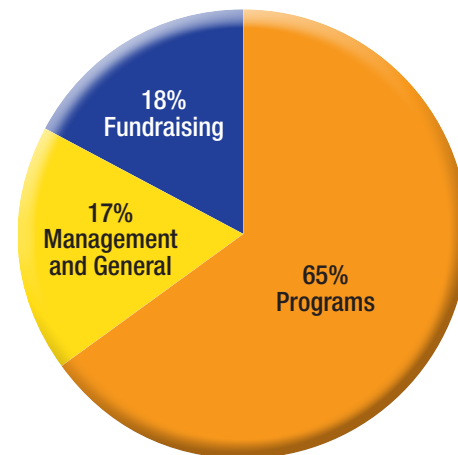
Foundation Grant Income	\$	156,001
Membership		650
Donations		1,625
Sponsorships		600
Total Revenues and Other Support	\$	158,876

#### Expenses

Program Services	\$	80,836
Management and General		21,670
Fundraising		22,145
Total Expenses	\$	124,651



2015 Operating Support and Revenues



2015 Operating Expenses

\*Other includes memberships, donations and sponsorships.

## THANK YOU

### 2015 ONAC BOARD MEMBERS

Christina Finsel, ONAC Executive Director ♦ cfinsel@oknativeassets.org  
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 Terry Mason Moore, General Counsel, Osage Nation Office of the Chiefs ♦ tmmoore@windstream.net  
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### 2015 ONAC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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 Cynthia Logsdon, Citizen Potawatomi CDC ♦ clogsdon@potawatomi.org  
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### 2015 SUPPORTERS

First Nations Development Institute ♦ Ford Foundation ♦ W. K. Kellogg Foundation ♦ AARP Oklahoma  
 Cherokee Nation Commerce Group ♦ Wichita and Affiliated Tribes

### CONTACT

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 Enrolled Member of the Osage Nation of Oklahoma



