

TRUST MATTERS

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Table of Contents

Trust Services	1
New Contact Us Webpage	2
Vince Logan Vetted	2
Indian Trust Commission	3
Field Operations Outreach	3
Sales at Reservations	4
IIM Audit Outcome	4

Trust Services: Where the Money Hits the Mail

Trust Services (TS), part of the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST), collaborates with internal and external stakeholders to effectively and efficiently process receipts, disbursements, and probate packages through the TS Office of Trust Funds Management. These functions are also supported by staff of the TS Office of Trust Reporting and Reconciliation, which will be highlighted in the spring issue. As stated by Deputy Special Trustee – Trust Services Doug Lords, “We’re the center of the wheel.”

More than 400,000 individual and tribal Indian trust beneficiaries receive their funds because of the work done by Trust Services’ Office of Trust Funds Management. The dedicated individuals who work there process over **37,000 financial transactions a day** for beneficiaries. That is approximately 9.3 million financial transactions a year.

In addition to financial transactions, this Office’s employees perform more than a **million routine file maintenance (RFM) transactions a year**. Examples of these transactions are address and name changes, such as those that occur when someone marries. It also includes changing disbursements from mailed checks to wire transfers, or making other changes to the ways beneficiaries choose to receive their funds.

Trust Funds Management personnel process approximately **9,000 probate packages a year**, in addition to all the RFM transactions. This complicated behind-the-scenes work requires attention to detail. The TS team members who do this are proud of the difference they make to the lives of beneficiaries.

The primary goal of Trust Services is timely and accurate processing of trust transactions.

The employees who work in Trust Services constantly strive to improve work processes to provide better service and achieve their goal to timely and accurately process trust transactions. They are always on the lookout for ways to make improvements. A major software revision is in the works. This “control desk” software will track work, from the time a request comes in until it is completed. Currently, TS uses a paper system to track the work. The new software will not only track the work but it will create a paperless system, which will also cut costs. Moving from a paper-based system to one that is paperless means that employees will be able to do this work from different locations, creating the opportunity for employees to telework. The benefits of teleworking include improved work/life balance, reduced office space costs, and less traffic and reduced emissions into the environment.

To streamline and improve efficiency, Trust Services eliminated a \$750,000 service contract, effective fiscal year 2013. They redistributed work internally, without hiring new staff. This meant they had to reorganize their people to implement the improved processes. They are rightfully proud of their three-quarter of a million dollar savings, and their excellent productivity.

During the government shutdown in October 2013, *with minimal staffing*, Trust Services ensured that deposits into beneficiary accounts and disbursement requests were processed timely and accurately. Trust Services also worked with OST Field Operations and Bureau of Indian Affairs staff to process tribal disbursements that were desperately needed to keep vital tribal programs running during the shutdown. The personnel of Trust Services are proud to put the well-being of beneficiaries first!

New "Contact Us" Web Page Includes Facebook Links

Are you looking for a local office to help with Indian trust issues? Click on the new "contact us" page on the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) website. The page provides links to pages for all OST field offices and their Facebook pages. It also includes links to other Interior offices that support Indian trust matters.

The new contact us page is available at www.doi.gov/ost. Look for the link in the yellow navigation box on the right side of the home page. The link is also listed in the drop down list under the "About OST" green tab at the top of the home page.

OST's field office webpages and Facebook pages were created to allow users to access trust information using a variety of different tools. When you visit a local OST Facebook page, please take a second to click on its **Like** button.

page looks like this



Contact Us

Print Text Size

If you have *any* questions about your trust funds or your trust assets, contact your local OST Fiduciary Trust Officer or the OST Trust Beneficiary Call Center. In addition, the bottom part of this page includes contact information for other DOI offices that support trust activities.

Trust Beneficiary Call Center: 1-888-678-6836 (toll free)

Fiduciary Trust Officers and Staffs
Both the website page and the Facebook page provide local contact information and email addresses for the location.

Alaska Region: [Website](#) [Facebook](#)
 Anadarko Agency: [Website](#) [Facebook](#)
 Blackfeet Agency: [Website](#) [Facebook](#)
 Cherokee Agency: [Website](#) [Facebook](#)
 Cheyenne River Agency: [Website](#) [Facebook](#)
 Chickasaw Agency: [Website](#) [Facebook](#)

Bureau of Indian Affairs
 MS-4606
 1849 C Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20240
 Telephone: (202) 208-5116 or (800) 246-8101
 Telefax: (202) 208-6334

Bureau of Land Management
 1849 C Street NW, Rm. 5665
 Washington DC 20240
 Phone: 202-208-3801
 Fax: 202-208-5242
director@blm.gov

Office of Natural Resources Revenue
 1849 C Street NW, Mail Stop 4211
 Washington DC 20240
 (202) 513-0600

Land Buy-Back Program
 Genevieve Giaccardo, Tribal Relations Advisor, 202-208-1541
 Andrea Patton, Tribal Relations Advisor, 202-208-1547
 Anthony (Morgan) Rodman, Tribal Relations Advisor, 202-208-2033
 Faride A. Kraft, Cooperative Agreement Specialist, 202-219-1335

Vince Logan Vetted for Special Trustee Position by Senate Committee

Vincent G. Logan was nominated by the Obama Administration to be the fourth Special Trustee for American Indians. A candidate for the position of Special Trustee requires approval by the Senate.

The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held a confirmation hearing on December 11, 2013. Due to Senate rules, the nomination was resubmitted to the 113th Congress, Second Session. A subsequent vote to "report out of committee favorably" was successful on January 29, 2014.

Logan still must be approved by a vote of the full Senate.

No date has been set for that vote.

Logan is owner of The Nations Group Advisors, LLC. His company works with Native American tribes on asset management, investment strategies, and financial education. He is a member of the Osage Nation.

Did you know? Pay.gov shortens the time it takes for lease payments to get to beneficiaries.



Indian Trust Commission Issues Final Report

There has been a lot of hard work for two years by the Secretarial Commission on Indian Trust Administration and Reform (Commission). On December 10, 2013, the five Commissioners held a final webinar to approve their final report to be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior.

The Commission was tasked with conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the Department of the Interior’s management of American Indian trust assets and offering recommendations for improvements to the trust administration system. Serving on the Commission were Chairwoman Fawn Sharp, Quinault Indian Nation (Commission Chair); Chairman Tex G. Hall, Three Affiliated Tribes; Dr. Peterson Zah, former President, Navajo Nation; Robert Anderson, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe-Boise Forte Band; and Stacy Leeds, Cherokee.

The final report recommends the establishment of a new independent organizational structure, the Indian Trust Administration Commission (ITAC), which would report directly to the Secretary of the Interior.

The new structure would handle all Indian trust matters that are currently carried out by a variety of Interior bureaus and offices. Functions of the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) would be included within that structure. The establishment of the ITAC would require legislative action. In the event it takes longer than two years to launch the new organizational structure, the report recommends a “temporary transfer of OST functions to the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs....”

A copy of the final report is available on Interior’s website at www.doi.gov/cobell/commission. The complete report is currently being reviewed in the Office of the Secretary.



Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) Field Operations Reaches Out

Alaska Region personnel were very involved at the Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Providers Conference, December 2013. Fiduciary Trust Officer Glenda Miller presented at the trust services workshop. OST staff interacted with attendees at their conference booth, collecting 288 leads on beneficiaries whose name and/or address information needed to be updated. Keeping contact information current ensures beneficiaries receive regular communications from OST, including financial disbursements and statements.



OST’s Glenda Miller (middle) and Tammy Buffone (right) assist a beneficiary (left) at the outreach booth.



About the same time, much further south in New Mexico, Orlanda Mute with OST’s Navajo Region and Emeline Begay with OST’s Eastern Navajo Agency were advancing financial skills. This workshop about managing money was offered to high school students. It was presented by First Nations Development Institute with assistance from volunteers from the community, including staff from OST.

OST’s Emeline Begay (right) signs up a workshop attendee (left).

Sales Occurring for Landowners with Interests at Pine Ridge and Makah Reservations — *More to Come!*

The Department of the Interior announced in December 2013 that owners of fractionated land interests at the **Pine Ridge and Makah Reservations** were the first to receive purchase offers under the Department's Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations (Buy-Back Program). The Pine Ridge Reservation is among the most highly-fractionated locations in the United States; landowners with purchasable interests have been located in 46 states across the country. As of late February 2014, over \$5 million worth of fractionated land had been acquired.

Sellers received fair market value for their land based on objective appraisals. In addition, sellers also received a base payment of \$75 per offer, regardless of the value of the land. Some owners received more than \$100,000 for their interests (offer amounts will vary based on the particular interests held). In addition, sales trigger a contribution to the **Cobell Education Scholarship Fund**. This contribution is in addition to purchase amounts paid to individual sellers, so it will not reduce the amount landowners receive for their fractionated interests.

The Buy-Back Program was created to implement the land consolidation component of the *Cobell* Settlement, which provided a \$1.9 billion fund to purchase fractionated interests in trust or restricted land from willing sellers at fair market value within a ten year period. Interested sellers will receive payments directly into their IIM accounts. Once acquired, these

consolidated interests will be held in trust for tribal governments to manage for uses benefiting the tribes and their members.

Interior holds about 56 million acres in trust or restricted status for American Indians. The Department holds this land in more than 200,000 tracts, of which about 93,500 – on approximately 150 reservations – contain fractional ownership interests available for

What Can You Do?

Are you interested in potentially selling ownership interests in your land so that it can be returned to your tribe?

Call the Trust Beneficiary Call Center at 1-888-678-6836 to register your information.

purchase by the Buy-Back Program. Approximately 90% of the fractionated lands available to purchase are in 40 of the 150 reservations. To learn more about the Buy-Back Program, go to www.doi.gov/buybackprogram.

Participation in the Buy-Back Program is voluntary and selling land does not jeopardize a landowner's ability to receive individual settlement payments from the *Cobell* Settlement. Settlement payments are being handled separately from the Buy-Back Program by the Garden City Group, at 1-800-961-6109. More information on the *Cobell* Settlement is available at <http://www.indiantrust.com>.

IIM Trust Fund Independent Audit Outcome is "Clean"

The Department of the Interior's Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians' (OST) independent annual audit resulted in an unqualified opinion for the Individual Indian Money (IIM) Trust Fund financial statements for fiscal year 2013. This is the first time the audit has resulted in an unqualified opinion, informally referred to as a "clean" audit, since the initial audit was prepared in 1995. The audit was completed November 18, 2013, by KPMG LLP.

Since taking over the trust funds management in 1996, OST has corrected more than 47 deficiencies and seven material weaknesses that existed from that first audit in fiscal year 1995. Moving forward, OST's goal is to sustain this level of performance to continue to provide efficient and accurate accounting of the funds entrusted to its management. Current and past annual audits are available on the OST website at www.doi.gov/ost/audit.

OST manages significant financial assets of tribal and individual Indian trust accounts. In fiscal year 2013, \$1.4 billion was received into and \$1.2 billion was disbursed from tribal and individual accounts with 73 percent of the funds disbursed electronically. Approximately \$4.6 billion of trust funds were invested to help meet the needs and objectives of tribal and individual beneficiaries.