Empowerment Saga

The Choice

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 6
The story begins with shape-shifters, four birds - Eagle, Raven, Hawk, and Owl - perched on telephone lines on the outskirts of the Native community. They are spiritual helpers to a group of teens - Shining Star, Theresa, Ranger, and Jay. These young teens learn financial resources as they embark on many adventures, and encounter intrigue in the process!

**The Choice** shows the perils and rewards of making the right life choices, and how traditional values can help with those choices in order to thrive.

**EAGLE**

Eagle is an ancient spirit, all knowing, all seeing. As a human, he transforms into a strong leader who guides others through their journeys. He wears a medicine bag.

**OWL**

Owl is a wise one, and beyond. As a human, she conveys wisdom to others about their life situations. Owl always carries her fringed purse.

**RAVEN**

Raven is the one who brings balance; all-encompassing of all the attributes of life. In human form, she evokes reasonable consideration of all facts. Raven wears a turquoise ring.

**HAWK**

Hawk is a hunter and a messenger, a patient observer with a quirky sense of humor. In human form, he is always physically fit and active. He constantly wears his bead and bone choker.
YOUR BUSINESS IS GOING TO TAKE OFF, JUST LIKE YOUR DAD'S IS! I AM SO PROUD OF MY SON - AND YOU MY GIRL! YOUR DAD'S CLIENTS ARE SO HAPPY - THEY TRUST HIM TO HELP THEM, HIS FINANCIAL CONSULTING BUSINESS WAS CLEARLY NEEDED IN OUR TOWN.

IT WILL ALWAYS BE IMPORTANT TO HAVE PEOPLE THAT YOU KNOW AND TRUST, BUT THEY DON'T NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE RIGHT NEXT DOOR. I'M LEARNING THAT OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS AS BIG AS WE WANT IT TO BE, NOWADAYS. I'M PRETTY HIP FOR AN OLD LADY YOU KNOW?

NOT JUST IN OUR TOWN - HE USED SOME OF THE LOAN TO MARKET TO THE WHOLE REGION! IT'S WEIRD THAT SOME OF HIS CLIENTS ARE PEOPLE WE DON'T KNOW AT ALL!

IF YOU SAY 'HIP', THEN YOU'RE NOT!

WHAT? I NEVER SAID, 'HIP'.

IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE CALLING THE STORE? NATIVE NOW?

UH-OH, I USED 'HIP' ON THE GRAND OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR NATIVE NOW!

YOU'RE TOTALLY FIRED.

THAT SAYS IT ALL: OUR TRADITIONAL CRAFTS MIXED WITH MODERN TRENDS, NOTHING COULD BE BETTER.

SHINING STAR, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FRIEND, JAY? IS HE IN BUSINESS WITH YOU GUYS? DID HE EVER GET OUT OF TROUBLE WITH THOSE CROOKS?

WELL, YES AND NO... IT'S COMPLICATED, GRANDMA. I DON'T THINK WE CAN USE JAY. HE ISN'T DEPENDABLE AND HAS LOTS OF ISSUES. MAYBE HE MIGHT COME ON BOARD LATER. WE HOPE SO, BUT IT'S UP TO HIM.

HELLO, LIGHT WOMAN, IS BEAR IN?

YES, BUT HE HAS MR. LONG HOUSE WITH HIM NOW. WOULD YOU LADIES LIKE TO SIT DOWN AND WAIT IN THE LIVING ROOM?

YES AND THANK YOU.

REMEMBER? THERESA WAS NEXT - SHE'S GOT TO GET DAD TO CHECK THE BOOKS FOR NATIVE NOW.

I'M GOOD - I'LL WAIT 'TILL LAST. I'M ACTUALLY GOING TO SEE IF HE CAN USE SOME ASSISTANCE.
THANK YOU, DEAR. I NOTICED AS I CAME IN, THERE WAS AN OWL PERCHED IN YOUR TREE. YOU KNOW, OWLS HAVE SECOND SIGHT, AND THEY HAVE A SPECIAL SONAR DETECTOR TO LOCATE PREY - AND PREDATORS! - AND I THOUGHT.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MY MONEY LIKE THAT? THAT'S WHY I'M HERE TO SEE BEAR.

THAT'S A GREAT THOUGHT. I'M SURE BEAR MIGHT KNOW SOME GOOD OPTIONS TO KEEPING YOUR MONEY SAFE.

FOR A LONG TIME I THOUGHT, IF I JUST STAY OFF THE INTERNET, I'LL BE FINE, AND THEN PEOPLE STARTED TELLING ME I'M ON THERE ANYWAY! PEOPLE CAN FIND OUT ALL KINDS OF THINGS ABOUT ME!

BUT I'VE HEARD THERE ARE A LOT OF SCAMS. YOU KNOW, THOSE TYPES OF PEOPLE WHO ARE DISHONEST. THEY TRY TO STEAL FROM ELDERLY AND POOR PEOPLE BY MAKING THEM THINK THEY'LL HELP THEM GET MONEY, AND THEY STEAL THEIR NAMES AND SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS, AND BANK NUMBERS TOO.

SOME PEOPLE ARE LIKE THOSE ANIMALS THAT DON'T CARE WHAT THEY EAT, OR WHO THEY STEAL IT FROM. PEOPLE ARE NOT SO DIFFERENT FROM ANIMALS.

I HAVE HEARD OF THAT TOO.

THE MOON IS FULL.

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THE FULL MOON?

NO, WHAT?

CRAZY THINGS CAN HAPPEN. IMPORTANT THINGS TOO. YOU KNOW OUR PEOPLE HAVE LONG USED THE PHASES OF THE MOON TO TELL THEM WHEN TO PLANT, OR TO HUNT, OR WHEN TO HAVE CERTAIN CEREMONIES.

WOW, COOL! NOPE, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT.

YOU DIDN'T? GUESS I HAVEN'T BEEN DOING MY JOB!

WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE ANYBODY USES THAT STUFF ANYMORE.

I USED THE MOON TO DETERMINE WHEN I SHOULD APPLY FOR MY LOAN.

REALLY? DID IT WORK?

I WAS GRANTED A LOAN. I HAD TO FIND THE RIGHT PLACE THAT DIDN'T CHARGE SO MUCH INTEREST OR HIGH FEES. I'M GLAD I TOOK MY TIME IN PHASES, YOU KNOW. DID MY RESEARCH! AND JUST LIKE THE FULL MOON KEEPS COMING BACK EACH MONTH WITHOUT FAIL, SO DOES MY LOAN PAYMENT.

AS THE DAYS GO BY, JAY'S ABSENCE CONTINUES TO GROW ON THE KIDS' MINDS.

THANKS, BEAR. SEE YOU NEXT MONTH - AND YOU'LL BE HEARING FROM MY COUSIN TOO.

WILL I BE NEXT?

I WASN'T EXPECTING THAT.

JAY HASN'T BEEN SEEN IN TWO DAYS NOW, GUYS. I HAD TO TELL HIS MOM WHAT HAPPENED - HOW HE BORROWED MONEY FROM THE WRONG GUYS, AND WE NEARLY GOT KILLED OVER IT. SHE WASN'T HAPPY.

I HAVE THIS REALLY FUNNY FEELING THAT SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENED.

I HAD A DREAM THAT HE WAS FAR AWAY WITH THESE FOUR PEOPLE, AND ONE OF THEM WAS THIS AWESOME EAGLE!

I BET SOME OF THOSE GANG MEMBERS FOUND OUT ABOUT THEIR BUDDIES GOING TO JAIL, AND CAME AFTER JAY.

HE SHOULD HAVE LEFT WITH US!

MAYBE HE JUST TOOK OFF WITH THOSE LOSER BUDDIES. YOU KNOW HOW ROUGH AND TOUGH THEY THINK THEY ARE.

I HAVE THE FOUR OF US WILL BE WORKING TOGETHER EVERY DAY I MEAN... THE THREE OF US.

CAN'T WAIT TILL I'M DOING THIS IN OUR OWN OFFICE.

I KNOW! THE THREE OF US.

WELL, TIME WILL TELL. I'M SURE HE IS FINE, BUT YOU KNOW WE MADE THE RIGHT DECISION TO TURN AWAY FROM JAY. WE CAN'T FIX HIM.

NO, BUT WE CAN SUPPORT HIS WANTING TO CHANGE.
YOU KNOW, HE SEEMS TO BLAME HIMSELF FOR HIS FATHER’S DEATH. HE SURVIVED THE CAR CRASH WHEN HE WAS ONLY 14, AND HIS DAD DIDN’T.

YEAH, BUT HE HAS TO WANT TO.

YOU KNOW, THE FUNDRAISING EVERYONE WAS HELPING WITH FOR THE ELDERS. ANYWAY, JAY DIDN’T KNOW I WAS WATCHING, I SAW HIM PUNCH JESSIE AND GO THROUGH HIS POCKETS. WHEN HE SAW ME, HE STOPPED. I DON’T THINK THAT MONEY MADE IT TO THE FUND, AND GUESS WHO TOOK IT?

LOTS OF PEOPLE HAVE HAD TRAGEDY. I’M NOT HIS SHRINK, BUT I DO KNOW HE HAS TO STOP THINKING HE CAN GET AWAY WITH BULLYING OTHERS.

I DON’T THINK JAY WANTS TO CHANGE.

AFTER BEING SURROUNDED BY TWO SHAPE SHIFTERS - EAGLE AND HAWK - JAY EXPERIENCES A VISION INTO HIS FUTURE, WHERE HE LEARNS THE LESSON OF HIS LIFE.

WHERE ARE WE?

TAKE A GOOD LOOK.

WHAT?

WHAT, THAT’S ME?

TAKE A GOOD HARD LOOK. SEE THAT MAN OVER THERE IN THE CORNER WITH A WHITE SCARF AROUND HIS HEAD?

YOUR CHOICES HAVE PUT YOU HERE.

YOU WERE A BAD, BAD BOY, BIG TIME!

DUDE! THIS IS YOU IN THE FUTURE!

NO ONE MADE YOU DO ANYTHING YOU DIDN’T WANT TO DO.

I DON’T UNDERSTAND...

COME. LET’S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK.

BECAUSE YOU CONTINUED TO BULLY, YOU LOST TOUCH WITH EVERYONE CLOSE TO YOU, INCLUDING YOUR BEST FRIENDS. YOU DIDN’T DEAL WITH YOUR ANGER ISSUES OR ADDRESS WHY YOU PICKED ON THE WEAK. YOU BEGAN TO STEAL, CHEAT, AND EVENTUALLY JOINED THE VERY GANG THAT TRIED TO KILL YOU.

WHAT DID I DO?

THIS CAN’T BE!

THIS IS NEVER HURT ANYONE, WELL, NOT BAD ANYWAY.

RIGHT. WHAT ABOUT THE LITTLE KID WHO WAS HURT RUNNING FROM YOU? HE RAN INTO A CAR AND WAS SEVERELY INJURED. YOU EVENTUALLY KILLED A MAN WHILE ROBBING A GROCERY STORE.

I WOULD NEVER DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT - ROB OR KILL.
SEE THIS MAN?

HE ACTUALLY IS THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FINANCIAL RUIN OF THE FUNDS IN YOUR TRIBE'S BUSINESS ACCOUNT. SOMEONE DIDN'T DO THEIR HOMEWORK AND RUN A BACKGROUND CHECK ON HIM...

HE IS IN FOR FORGERY, EMBEZZLEMENT, IDENTITY THEFT AND MURDER.

HE SMOOTH TALKED HIS WAY INTO TAKING OVER $200,000 FROM THE TRIBAL ACCOUNT.

YOUR TRIBE DIDN'T HAVE ANY FINANCIAL SECURITY IN PLACE NO INSURANCE. PREDATORS LIKE HIM ARE EVERYWHERE, ALL OVER THE WORLD. THEY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ANY PLACE OR ANYONE THEY CAN STEAL FROM.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE IN THE SAME PRISON WITH CRIMINALS THAT HAVE TAKEN FROM YOUR TRIBE?

YOU, JAY, ARE IN HERE WITH THE LOWEST OF THE LOWS.

DUDE, YOU DESERVE TO BE HERE.

I'M NOT LIKE THEM!

I WOULD HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH MONEY TO OPEN A MILLION CHECKING ACCOUNTS!

IF I HAD A SHINY PENNY FOR EVERY TIME I HEARD THAT ONE

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR FRIENDS IN THE FUTURE AND WHERE YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN.
SHINING STAR, THERESA
OUR INTERNET IS
OFFICALLY ON WITH THE
BEST UPGRADE EVER.

ANNND...
WE ARE THE PROUD OWNERS
OF THE FASTEST COMPUTERS
ON THE MARKET.

COOL, RANGER!

NEW STORE
LOCATION, NEW TECH TOOLS-
NOW WE CAN GROW OUR BUSINESS BOTH ONLINE
AND HERE AT THE BRICK-AND-MORTAR STORE!

HERE YA GO
CAN'T WE GET
THIS INFORMATION OUT
THERE ONLINE?

ARE YOU SURE YOU
WANT ME TO TAKE THESE TO
THE POST OFFICE?

Yeah, we are
doing that too
but tangible
marketing is
still good.

Yeah, I know.
We all still miss him, Theresa,
but he made his choices.

And now he's
going to pay for it.
I heard his mother is really sick
when he got the death sentence, she took
it pretty hard. Never quite been the same.

I wish he
would have listened to us that night. I wish he
would have listened to someone who tried
to help him.

If he could
have only seen the pain
he has caused his family
and us, his friends,
the whole community.

He could have
been a great athlete
with the world at his
fingertips.

EAGLE AND JAY APPEAR IN THE HOME OF JAY'S MOTHER.

Why are we here?
I don't want to see
any more.

Yes, you will
see more.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I DID WRONG...

I LOVED HIM. HE WAS ALL I HAD LEFT AFTER HIS FATHER WAS KILLED.

I TRIED TO HELP HIM, WHY DID HE TURN FROM MY LOVE? I'M HIS MOTHER. I SHOULD HAVE PROTECTED HIM.

PLEASE...

TAKE ME BACK...
WOW! WHAT A VISION!

MAN, DID I GO SOMEWHERE?

WAS THAT REAL?

AN EAGLE! A GOOD OMEM!

DO YOU THINK HE GOT IT?

RIGHT... I DOUBT IT!

IT REALLY FELT REAL!

TIME WILL TELL.

I HAVE FAITH IN HIM. HE LOOKED PRETTY SCARED AT SEEING HIMSELF IN THAT HORRIBLE PRISON. NOT TO MENTION WHAT IT DID TO HIS MOM.

JAY RETURNS TO HIS HOME. HIS MOTHER IS WAITING.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN!

I HAVE BEEN WORRIED SICK! YOUR FRIENDS HAVE BEEN WORRIED SICK... THERESA TOLD ME ABOUT THAT GANG!
I WAS AT THE POOL HALL AND WELL, UM-UH. I DON'T KNOW WHY I DO THE THINGS I DO, BUT I WAS PICKING A FIGHT WITH THESE TWO LITTLE KIDS. I WANTED THEIR MONEY TO PAY BACK THE GANG FOR MONEY I BORROWED.

THEN FROM NO WHERE THESE TWO DUDES SHOW UP AND ONE OF THEM ASKED WHY DON'T I PICK ON SOMEONE MY OWN SIZE.

THE LAST THING I REMEMBER...

IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME I'VE TAKEN MONEY FROM LITTLE KIDS. MOM, I'M JUST A BIG BULLY. I NEED HELP. I DON'T KNOW WHY I DO WHAT I DO. I'M SO ANGRY AND IF I DON'T GET HELP I'M GOING TO END UP HURTING SOMEONE OR DIE.

IT WAS LIKE I TOOK A JOURNEY WITH THESE, THESE...

IT SCARED ME TO DEATH.

I WAS IN PRISON, MOM! ME, IN PRISON! IT WAS SO REEEEAAALL, LIKE A VISION!

I HAVE TO STOP DOING WHAT I AM DOING. I CAN'T KEEP PUSHING PEOPLE AROUND. I NEED HELP UNDERSTANDING WHY I HAVE SO MUCH ANGER. I'VE SEEN WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE WRONG CHOICES. I'VE HAD A VISION.

OUTSIDE, HAWK SOARS.

I'M READY. I'M SO SORRY FOR HURTING YOU.

I DIDN'T SEE HOW MUCH I HURT MYSELF, AND ENDED UP HURTING EVERYONE AROUND ME. I GUESS WHEN I HEAR THE ELDERs SAY WE ARE ALL CONNECTED, THAT IS WHAT THEY MEAN.

I DIDN'T GET IT BEFORE, BUT I DO NOW.

THANK YOU, CREATOR, FOR BRINGING MY SON HOME TO ME.

YES, JAY, I KNOW. SON, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WHAT HAPPENED?

SPIRITUAL BIRDS.

MAYBE THEY WERE YOUR HELPERS OR GUARDIANS.

MAYBE, JUST MAYBE... DID YOU GO SOMEWHERE?

WELL, I DON'T WANT TO END UP WHERE THEY TOOK ME.

LET'S MAKE SOME PHONE CALLS AND SEE WHAT WE CAN DO.

WHEN ONE HURTS, AND IS MAKING THE WRONG CHOICES, IT HURTS US ALL.

I KNOW THE MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC ON OUR RESERVATION IS HAVING SUCCESS. THEY BLEND MODERN MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY WITH THE TRADITIONAL VALUES OF OUR ANCESTORS.
After a month, a nervous Jay meets with his friends.

You're really back!

Wow! You're back!

How did they treat you?

How do you feel - are you ok?

My mind and spirit suffered from low self-esteem and anger. I couldn't see what I was doing to others.

Hey guys. I'm really sorry for not being there for you, and that I was such a jerk and nearly got us all killed.

Well, I don't know. Other than, I believe that someone was watching over me. Maybe what my grandma and mom always said, we have strong medicine within our people.

I think I had a vision, but it wasn't just that. It's hard to explain there were these spiritual birds, one in particular.

An eagle?

Yeah! How did you know?

I had a dream that you were safe and would be okay.

Dude, really?

Go on, Jay.

I don't think I will ever be the same again after that journey with those birds.

Real or unreal, it scared me into getting help. That's all I know.

Hey guys, do you need some help with your project? I need a job.

Remember, I'm cheap!

I'm one heck of a salesman, especially with the ladies.

What happened to change things?

I'm dealing with my anger issues and why I feel the need to act tough and prey on the weak. Maybe someday I can help someone else acting like I did.

I saw myself in the future, and it was scary and real. And I knew in my heart it could happen. I remember when my cousin went to prison. He wouldn't have been there if it weren't for alcohol or drugs.

That's where I ended up. On death row for killing someone because of my bad choices. I had become just like the hoods who were after me. I actually became part of the gang.
IT APPEARS OUR SMALL RESERVATION IS NOW TAKING ADVANTAGE OF COMMERCE.

AND OUR KIDS ARE DOING WELL IN THEIR BUSINESS, ALONG WITH SO MANY MEMBERS OF THEIR TRIBE.

I WAS BETTING AGAINST HIM BUT JAY HAS HAD QUITE THE TURNAROUND.

YES, IT SEEMS THIS COMMUNITY MAY HAVE REALLY GOTTEN A HANDLE ON FINANCIAL GAIN AND PROSPERITY. I KNOW THEY WON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THEIR TRADITIONAL VALUES AND CULTURE, DESPITE ALL THAT THEY'VE LEARNED. IT IS OUR JOB TO GUIDE THEM TO CONTINUE TO LEARN, AND PROTECT THEM. WE WILL COME BACK WHEN WE ARE NEEDED HERE AGAIN.

WHEN I SAID, OUR WORK HERE IS DONE, I WAS THINKING MORE VACATION THAN NEW JOB!

OH, QUIT YOUR SQUAWKING! SPIRITUAL GUIDES DON'T TAKE VACATIONS!

NOW LET'S GO AND SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING BY THE SEA.

DUDE, IT'S COLD HERE! I DON'T SEE ANY PEOPLE.

THEY ARE FURTHER INLAND.

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? I'M FREEZING MY BUTT OFF!

YOU DON'T HAVE A BUTT!

OH MY, THIS PLACE IS SO SMALL... IS THERE ANY INDUSTRY HERE?

YES, BUT OUR PEOPLE HAVE TO TRAVEL THIRTY MILES EAST TO WORK. FISHING AND WHALING USED TO BE THE BIG BUSINESS HERE.

BORING... LET'S MOVE ON TO SOMEPLACE THAT HAS MORE ACTION.
No, we are needed here.

There is much to do.

Yes, I can see that.

These guys don't know what they are talking about. We need to do something!

Yes, but what?

I don't know what, but we need help. We have to know how to make the tribe's economy better. I'm tired of banging our heads against a rock!

That's our cue!

Can you folks tell me where the tribal offices are?

Yeah, sure! We're going that way now.

What is that boy up to next?
IT HAS BEEN MANY YEARS SINCE THE SHAPE-SHIFTERS VISITED SHINING STAR'S NOW BUSY RESERVATION TOWN.


ALTHOUGH THE OLD WAYS OF HUNTING AND FISHING ARE FOREVER GONE, THE NEW WAYS OF BLENDING TRADE WITH FINANCIAL TOOLS FOR SECURITY AND A GLOBAL MARKETPLACE PRESENT ABUNDANT NEW OPPORTUNITIES. MUCH LIKE THE ANCIENT ONES HAD TO MASTER THEIR SKILLS FOR THE HUNT, THEIR CRAFTS, TRADING AND CULTIVATING IN ORDER TO SURVIVE.

IT IS TIME TO MASTER NEW SKILLS SO THAT WE MAY CONTINUE TO THRIVE. THIS FAST MODERN AGE OF OUR TIMES WILL ALLOW YOUNGER GENERATIONS TO PROSPER, AND WITH THE HELP OF OUR ELDERS, AND GOOD LEADERS, OUR YOUTH WILL NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THEIR HERITAGE.

THE SPIRIT HELPERS ARE NEVER FAR AWAY, ONLY TO BE CALLED UPON. IT'S THE ANCIENT WAY OF THE PEOPLE.
Rose Red Elk (Sioux/Assiniboine)

Author of the Empowerment Saga series of stories, Rose is an international performing arts entertainer, also known by her Native American traditional and stage name, Red Feather Woman. An accomplished award winning recording artist, storyteller, singer, songwriter and author from the Fort Peck Reservation in Poplar, Montana, and an enrolled member of the Sioux/Assiniboine Tribes, Rose continues to discover the realms of spiritual awareness through the gift of storytelling, in written, oral and musical forms. Her fiction is themed with traditional values, blended with ancient stories from the past.

www.redfeatherwoman.com

Matthew Barkhausen

Matthew worked with the Native American and woman owned small business Circuit Media as an illustrator for the Empowerment Saga series of stories. His artwork for this and other projects focuses on Native American culture. He has provided artwork to the Rocky Mountain Indian Chamber of Commerce and other Native American organizations. Matthew is of Cherokee and Tuscarora heritage. He has a B.A. in interactive media design from the Art Institute of Colorado.

www.matthewbarkhausen.com

Other Circuit Media illustrators who contributed greatly to the project were Jon Hormachea, creative design director, Abby McMillen, illustrator, and Ali Bibbo, graphic designer.

Joseph Arnold

Working as a freelancer for a Denver based company, Joe created the original images of the characters. His artwork reflects his philosophy that dedication and practice are critical aspects of being an artist. After serving five years active duty with the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne and three years with the Colorado National Guard, Joe completed his education in June 2102 at The Art Institute of Colorado with a bachelor's degree in media arts and animation. He has worked for Disney Online Studios Boulder and 12-6 Studios in Denver.

Original concept by J.P. Barham
Creating the Empowerment $aga

The Empowerment $aga is a series of stories to engage youth 14-18 years of age in developing basic financial skills so they will learn how to build and preserve their own financial wealth. These stories, offered in colorful comic-style graphics, are reservation-based in order to bring "home" to Native youth the message of handling their finances from an early age.

Recognizing the importance of financial knowledge to IIM account holders, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) has been working for years to bring financial skills training to account holders of all ages. OST has partnered with other government agencies, Native community development financial institutions, Native organizations, and others to offer culturally sensitive financial education.

The Empowerment $aga is another opportunity to expand financial skills training in Indian Country by encouraging youth-to-youth and multi-generational discussions about this topic. The stories highlight the value of knowing these financial skills, and illustrate the challenging consequences when this knowledge is not known or used properly.

The characters and stories of the Empowerment $aga series are wholly-owned by the government of the United States and cannot be used without the written consent of the government. For more information regarding financial education opportunities in Indian Country, please contact:

OST's Director of Financial Education
brian_ross@ost.doi.gov

or

Trust Beneficiary Call Center
1-888-678-6836

To contact your Fiduciary Trust Officer please visit:
http://www.doi.gov/ost/fto

U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240
202-208-4866