

WHEDA: Names Steele tribal liaison; Searles tapped for community economic development post in NE Wisconsin

Posted on Friday, Jun 4, 2021

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For Immediate Release: June 4, 2021

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MADISON – Erica Steele will add the role of tribal liaison to her repertoire while she continues to build strategic relationships as a member of the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority’s Community and Economic Development team. Steele succeeds Deby Dehn, a 15-year WHEDA member of the Community and Economic Development team who worked to advance affordable housing and economic development in a territory covering 21 counties in northeastern Wisconsin. “WHEDA respects the work of Wisconsin’s tribal nations in expanding equitable access to affordable housing and economic opportunity,” said WHEDA CEO Joaquín Altoro. “Erica Steele’s efforts to connect communities with WHEDA’s resources will support the tribes in this critical work. We also applaud the work of Deby Dehn, who strengthened these relationships and built mutual understanding through the years.” Bryan Bainbridge, CEO of the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, said WHEDA’s resources – including its single-family home loan products, small business and agricultural loan guarantees, tax credit programs and commercial gap financing – have an important role to play as tribal communities statewide work to improve members’ well-being.

“Safe, affordable housing plays a critical role in the health of our communities, particularly among our elders,” Bainbridge said. “We appreciate WHEDA’s partnership as we look to innovate, grow and move beyond the challenges of COVID.”

Steele brings more than a decade of experience working in community nonprofit and workforce development sectors, building diverse, collaborative partnerships to design solutions that put people first and increase equity, economic mobility and pathways to generational wealth. With a bachelor’s degree in Spanish, International Studies and Latin American Studies from UW-Madison, Steele currently serves as strategic market liaison for WHEDA.

While Steele will serve in the tribal liaison role, Jon Searles will serve as WHEDA’s community and economic development officer covering Dehn’s former region in northeastern Wisconsin. Searles joins WHEDA following work as vice president of marketing at Enterprise Community Partners, which develops, manages and advocates for affordable housing.

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ABOUT WHEDA

For more than 48 years, WHEDA has worked to provide low-cost financing for housing and small business development in Wisconsin. Since 1972, WHEDA has financed more than 78,000 affordable rental units, helped more than 135,000 families purchase a home, and provided more than 29,000 small business and agricultural loan guarantees. WHEDA is a self-supporting public corporation that receives no tax dollars for its operations. For more information on WHEDA programs, visit wheda.com or call 800-334-6873.

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