

# First American Capital Corp: From hesitation to education: How FACC helped one Native entrepreneur find her way forward

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For years, the idea of walking into a bank felt out of reach for April Stone, Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and owner of Stone House Weavers. I grew up believing that having access to money just wasn't possible," she says. "Because of my background and my lack of financial knowledge, growing my business felt like a step I'd never be able to take.

That changed when she started developing a business plan through the Ashland Area Development Corporation (AADC). What was initially an exercise in possibility quickly became something real. Through AADC, she discovered grant opportunities for women-owned Native businesses—and suddenly, doors began to open.

When it was time to contact potential lenders, FACC was second on the list. But it didn't take long to realize it was exactly where she belonged.

"If there was ever a place to find a banker who understood my situation and one who understood Native entrepreneurs, this was it," she says. "I needed someone I could connect with, someone who actually listened."

That person was Kara Gunderson, FACC Small Business Capital Access and Advising Manager.

From the very first conversations, Kara made time. She answered questions, explained unfamiliar terms, and carefully guided me through each step without

judgment or pressure. “She was approachable. Honest. Not afraid to put herself into the situation with me and help me figure it out,” she recalls. “She made it easy—and that eased so much of my anxiety.”

The process wasn’t easy. Developing a business plan involved venturing into unfamiliar areas: insurance, technology, and financial systems. It was uncomfortable. Challenging. And, as she describes it, “a difficult, yet beautiful experience.”

With FACC’s support and flexibility, it became easier to manage.

Today, her work is more than just a business—it’s a legacy. Through her basketweaving craft, she shares culture, history, and the stories of her ancestors with audiences across the country as a traveling cultural educator. “That’s an empowering feeling,” she says. “Because of this support, my work is out in the world.”

Her passion for promoting Native entrepreneurship stems from a shared sense of collaboration and empowerment. “When you work with FACC staff who truly understand your needs, it makes a difference,” she says. “It’s not just transactional, it’s collaborative. We work together to reach our goals.”

She also recognizes the broader challenges Native-owned businesses continue to face: fear of financial institutions, gaps in financial education, limited access to technology, and a lack of awareness about available resources. While times are changing, she knows many talented Native people still hesitate to take that first step.

That’s why organizations like FACC are important,” she says. “They’re on the ground in Indian Country, doing the work to help businesses like mine truly succeed.”

Regarding her future... As studio spaces change and new questions come up like “Where do I go next? Do I build a studio at home?” she knows she isn’t navigating the future alone.

For donors, partners, and funders, her message is clear: “Investing in Native entrepreneurship is about more than just economics. It’s about preserving culture, creating opportunities, and paving the way for the next generation.”

“Because of FACC,” she says, “I’m allowed to continue the work and stories of my ancestors. And now, those stories are being heard.”

Philanthropic gifts supporting FACC’s progress are crucial to accelerating business growth. This support enables FACC to expand its reach, boost its impact, and offer more opportunities to entrepreneurs across Wisconsin.

To learn more about how FACC can help you build your business, please visit [www.faccwi.org](http://www.faccwi.org).