



*Inspiring a New
Native America...*

Native Business Spotlight

ALEXIA ZEIGLER BRINGS SOME HAWAIIAN FLARE TO RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

An entrepreneur at heart, Alexia Ziegler knew she stumbled upon a possible business venture after having a Maui Wowi Hawaiian Smoothie one summer while travelling. It was something different and a healthy alternative to juice, sports drinks, and soda pop. Knowing the market where she lived in Rapid City, South Dakota, Alexia felt that the Hawaiian coffees and smoothies would be a hit. She found out there was an opportunity to own a Maui Wowi Hawaiian Franchise, but she didn't know how to fund it. That's where the South Dakota Native Entrepreneur Investment Fund, the first-ever statewide loan fund designed to increase access to capital for Native American entrepreneurs, came into the picture.

Alexia talked to their Business Development and Lending Departments at Four Bands Community Fund, who administers the loan fund in partnership with the South Dakota Indian Business Alliance. "They walked me through the whole process and explained what they looked for, how projects were funded, and what my requirements would be," Alexia says. Most recipients of business loans are required to complete a business development training course and to submit a business plan as part of the application process. "Really, those requirements just make you a better business person, so it was really great," adds Alexia.

In June 2013, Alexia's business loan was approved, which enabled her to purchase the Maui Wowi Hawaiian Franchise and the coffee and smoothie cart necessary to start her new business. Through out the summer she travelled to different events, set up her mobile storefront, and sold smoothies. As the weather has gotten colder, she now sells more coffee. The business has been such a success that she gets at least a couple calls a day from people asking her where she will be located next. As a result, Alexia is working on setting up a permanent storefront so that her product will be available on a more consistent basis to her loyal clientele.

Alexia attributes her great results to hard work and perseverance. Although approximately half of the Native Americans in Rapid City live below the poverty level, the capital that the Native Entrepreneur Investment Fund provides has the potential to help people generate new income streams. She says of her business venture, "I want to show others that you can be off the reservation and still be successful. They might shoot you down ten times at the bank, but believe in what you are doing. Know what you are going after and know your market."



Alexia Zeigler used a loan from the Native Entrepreneur Investment Fund to start her business in Rapid City, South Dakota.