



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Laura Galbraith

Ph: 231-995-7110

Email: laura@venturenorthfunding.com

WHITE BISON NATIVE ART WILL OFFER GENUINE NATIVE AMERICAN APPAREL AND JEWELRY AND... NEW FEDERAL GRANT TO VENTURE NORTH WILL HELP MORE SMALL BUSINESSES

CHARLEVOIX, MICHIGAN – On February 12, 2021, an announcement may have been lost in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic about a beautiful and rare animal spotted in Missouri's Ozark Mountains.

It was a white bison, discovered in Dogwood Canyon Nature Park in Lampe, Missouri. Bison founders named it **Takoda**, a Sioux word translating to "friend to everyone." The white bison has been a symbol of peace and good fortune in American indigenous cultures. Once estimated that one in one million bison were born white with only a few hundred existing in the 1800's, the population of the magical creatures has grown due to the work of conservationists and farmers.

The name "White Bison" will take on an added distinction later this summer with the opening of the **White Bison Native Art** company with a tagline not unlike its living namesake: **Traditional. Native. Proud.**

The company expects to begin the sale of culturally branded apparel and jewelry that capture the Native American experience later this summer through online sales and, later, with select retailers. The company is the inspiration of Virginia and Hank Fields, mother and son and members of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. The startup of the business is financed through Venture North Funding and Development, a nonprofit, tax exempt commercial financing organization covering northwest Michigan.

"The Fields are doing many things right to begin a successful business," said Laura Galbraith, President of Venture North. "They have devoted time to researching the opportunity. They used practical and academic training and available tools and consultants to prepare their business plan and financial forecast. They will start their business in a way that

RELATED NEWS

Venture North Awarded \$829,000 by U.S. Treasury for Relief in COVID-Stricken Communities, Focus on Underserved Populations

Traverse City, Michigan - The U.S. Department of Treasury awarded Venture North Funding and Development \$829,000 under its CDFI Rapid Response Program (RRP), a national effort to help Community Development and Financial Institutions (CDFI) respond to challenges created by the covid-19 pandemic, particularly in underserved communities.

"These awards provide CDFI's with flexible capital to help distressed and underserved communities take meaningful steps towards recovering from the debilitating economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic," said CDFI Fund Director Jodie Harris.

The timing of the new federal program for northwest Michigan's ten county region covered by Venture North, a certified CDFI, could not be better, said Laura Galbraith, Venture North's President who received notice of the funding from U.S. Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters.

"These funds will help us provide more support and service in our ten-county region to companies like **White Bison Native Art**, owned by underserved populations, as well as other companies in economically distressed areas and those seeking to rebound from COVID-19," said Galbraith. "We just completed awarding grants of over \$1 million to 300 small businesses in our ten-county region to help them recover from the COVID crisis. Many are coming back strong and already need growth capital such as the financing we will provide through this new award. We also have businesses seeking financing support for everything from starting up to growth and development. This award will help us extend our flexible terms and conditions that are tailored to fit the needs and circumstances of small businesses." Galbraith said that more details about the program and funding will be on the Venture North website at www.venturenorthfunding.org.

differentiates the quality and unique character of what they sell while bootstrapping costs while they develop a market presence.”

“Keeping tribal affiliations, heritage and culture alive is a priority and White Bison Native Art will be part of this revival,” said Hank Fields. “It is the mission of our company to do this through culturally branded apparel and jewelry that capture the Native American experience.”

The firm will sell apparel with words and graphics serving a social purpose, displaying what a person wants to show to the world. Jewelry will include things like earrings in the shape of dreamcatchers, long a symbol of Native lore, or a bracelet with turquoise stones that reflect a grounded and confident life.



“Our competitive edge will rest in the quality, authenticity and exclusivity of what we sell,” said Virginia Fields, also a skilled artist, especially with bead work. “We will continue to build relationships with Native Americans and work as partners to respectfully market their crafts. Our products will tell stories about the culture, beliefs and identities of Native Americans, being mindful of the ***Seventh Generation Principle*** that we want to leave behind a world that will benefit seven generations into the future.”

“We also have a technology edge,” said Hank Fields who has substantial prior work experience and advanced degrees in business administration, project management and intellectual property law. “We understand the importance of market segmentation, understanding buying preferences, and using the internet and social media to make our products and presence known and to offer ease of use and expediency to our customers.”

“In growing our business, we want to succeed in a way that empowers others, that encourages Tribal members to aspire and attain their goals including those related to their education and training,” he added. “And we also want to send a very clear message to Native American artists about the importance of their work in communicating stories that need to be told. With the good work of our artistic partners, we will become known as a business that captures the traditions and pride of great Native art. The Fields are encouraging artists and potential retailers to contact them at: **hankfields2000@yahoo.com or 818-523-3241.**”

Manistee

Wexford

Missaukee

Stop us on your street.

Venture North Funding and Development loans money to small businesses to help them and northwest Michigan communities flourish. We work at a grass roots level and offer flexible terms and conditions and consider small loans. We are a Community Development Financial Institution and place priority on providing loans and other resources to small businesses in distressed communities and under-represented populations, like women and ethnic minority business owners. **Call us. Email us. Or stop us on the street.** 231-995-7115 • info@venturenorthfunding.org