

Cory M. Blankenship

PO Box 1054 | Cherokee, North Carolina | [REDACTED]

Summary

Experienced Executive with a demonstrated history of working in the Financial Services industry and Tribal Government. Skilled in Strategic Planning, Nonprofit Management, Business Planning, Analytics, Budgets, and Governmental Affairs. Strong operations professional with a Masters of Public Affairs and Masters of Jurisprudence in Native American Law. Skilled Advisor and Consultant bringing resources to governments, nonprofits, and other organizations to solve operational and strategic challenges. Experienced member of Boards of Directors providing insights, guidance, operational and fiduciary oversight. Board experience includes leadership and officer roles of Chairman, Treasurer, and Committee Chair. Enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Experience

Executive Director

Native American Finance Officers Association (NAFOA) | September 2024 - Present (5 months)

Responsible for the day-to-day management of the national non-profit organization representing 170+ member tribes nationwide in growing tribal economies, and strengthening tribal finance. Responsible for the oversight of the organization's policy and advocacy work, the NAFOA Institute, and NAFOA's renowned conferences and events.

Community Investment Officer for Economic Opportunity

The Dogwood Health Trust | April 2023 – September (1 year 6 months)

Responsible for managing a grantmaking and impact investing portfolio for a region that includes the 18 western-most counties of North Carolina and the Tribal Lands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Investments are centered on social determinants of health and promoting a region where all residents can live, learn, earn, and thrive. Serve on the steering committee for the Appalachia Funders Network for the organization.

- Manage a portfolio of 30+ existing awards and added 30+ new awards to the economic development portfolio around workforce development, economic ecosystems, credential attainment, and broadband
- Assisted with the launch of a Digital Opportunities initiative around digital inclusion and equity across a vastly unserved and underserved area for highspeed internet
- Served on the Grants Management System evaluation and selection committee to coordinate the organization's software transition.

Secretary of Treasury (CFO)

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians | June 2017 – April 2023 (5 years 11 months)

Directed the work of the Office of Budget & Finance for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Implementation of financial best practices and governmental accounting standards. Served as a voting member of the EBCI Investment Committee and Balsam West Fiber Net Board of Directors. Ensured the tribe's fiscal policies align with strategic goals and objectives, recommending fiscal policy standards to tribal leadership for implementation.

- Launched the tribe's Sovereign Wealth Fund in 2019 introducing the first private equity strategy for tribal investments, growing the fund to over \$120M in 4 years.
- Launched the tribe's General Welfare Exclusion program called GenWell, allowing tribal members to receive direct financial benefits with no federal income tax under the general welfare provisions of tax code.
- Established the tribe's Higher Education Endowment to permanently fund higher education for members of the tribe.
- Successfully planned and implemented the tribe's financial strategy for COVID-19 response under the

CARES Act and ARP Act.

- Delivered six consecutive balanced budgets with no continuing resolutions.
- Named National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) 40 Under 40 Award recipient.

Director, Board of Directors

EBCI Holdings, LLC Mar 2021 - Present (3 years 4 months)

EBCI Holdings, LLC is the regional commercial gaming and hospitality company of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. EBCI is one of three federally recognized Cherokee Tribes with decades of experience in tribal gaming and centuries-long legacy as a strong and proud people. Our mandate is to build an influential economic driver that will diversify revenues to the tribal government ensuring future generations of economic sovereignty and sustainability.

- Serve as Board Treasurer and Chair of the Finance & Strategy Committee
- Oversaw three commercial gaming acquisitions and the establishment of a gaming technology investment fund
- Was the first commercial entity of the EBCI to provide predictable cash flow back to the government and on-pace to be the tribe's 4th largest revenue stream by 2025.
- Recipient of the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) 2023 Gaming Visionary Award.

President & CEO

RavenRock Strategy Group | Jan 2015 - Present (9 years 6 months)

Strategic Planning, Policy & Organizational Development consulting services for Indian Country. We seek to be a trusted advisor to tribes and tribal organizations through consulting and building administrative capacity.

- Worked with over 20 tribes and tribal organizations across the country
- Built out our family team with additional skills and credentials

Director of Finance and Management / Treasurer (Treasury Director)

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians | April 2010 – October 2015 (5 years 7 months)

Directed the work of the seven departments of the Office of Budget & Finance including; Accounting & Budget, Disbursements, Financial Reporting, Purchasing, Treasury, Revenue and Risk Management. Developed and implemented internal controls and financial best practices in the oversight and management of financial processes and the work of the office. Provided strategic direction and oversight of all work in the Office of Budget & Finance ensuring the delivery of key results - Timely & Accurate Data, Effective Communication with Superior Customer Service, Accountability & Moving Forward (TEAM). Provides leadership to staff, community, elected and senior leadership officials within the Tribal Government.

- Introduced the first budgeting for outcomes strategy for the Tribal Government
- Built a robust Tribal Investment Committee to oversee the tribe's investment accounts
- Established a budget stabilization investment account that allowed the tribe to navigate fluctuations in gaming revenues without major interruption to services or operations.
- Secured the tribe's first Tax Exempt Debt Financing with a private letter ruling from the State Department of Revenue for the construction of a \$85M hospital facility financed at 1.95% interest.
- Wrote legislation for the State of North Carolina recognizing the tribe's exclusive authority to tax both native-owned and non-native owned entities within tribal lands.
- Led the tribe through one of the first IRS tribal audits with no findings.

Education

- North Carolina State University Bachelors, Political Science 2003 - 2006
- Western Carolina University Masters, Public Affairs - Public Policy Concentration 2008 - 2011
- The University of Tulsa College of Law MJIL, Masters of Jurisprudence - Indian Law 2011 – 2013

Licenses & Certifications

- FINRA Series 6: investment company products/variable life contracts representative
- FINRA Series 63: uniform securities state law
- Non-Profit Management – Duke University Continuing Studies Program
- Tribal Financial Management – Native American Finance Officers Association (NAFOA)

Service

- Museum of the Cherokee Indian Board of Directors, Treasurer
- Cherokee Historical Association Board of Directors, Treasurer
- Appalachia Funders Network Steering Committee, Treasurer
- Balsam West Fiber Net Board of Directors, Past Chairman
- Madison Hornbuckle Children's Cancer Foundation, Past Chairman
- Cherokee Boys Club, Past President

Skills

- Budgets
- Strategic Planning
- Government
- Risk Management
- Nonprofits
- Public Policy
- Research
- Policy
- Program Management
- Analysis