



Congress must reauthorize Native American housing programs now

By Sami Jo Difuntorum, Executive Director, Siletz Tribal Housing Department; originally published Nov. 6, 2014, by the Indian Country Today Media Network

The cornerstone of healthy communities throughout the world is access to safe, culturally relevant and quality affordable housing. Nowhere is that more apparent than in Indian Country, where Indian housing has had a long history of challenges, from barriers to traditional credit to delays in surface lease approvals.

Tribes are now exercising their right of self-determination by advancing the shift from federally driven Tribal housing programs to developing and managing our own programs. Important housing legislation is now pending in Congress and we ask our Tribal leaders and allies to rally in support of its passage.

Native Americans face some of the worst housing and living conditions in the country and the availability of affordable, decent and safe housing in Indian country falls far below that of the general U.S. population.

According to a 2011 Census report, the American Indian and Alaska Native population rose 18 percent from 2000 to 2010 – almost twice the growth rate of the U.S. as a whole. The social and economic conditions of Native population differ from the non-Indian population along a variety of dimensions that affect their housing needs.

Poverty and unemployment rates have risen and remain consistently higher than

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**Siletz Tribal Restoration
Pow-Wow**

Nov. 15, 2014

Chinook Winds Casino Resort

Above: Alina Mason, Ayla Ben, Zoe Davis, Felisha Howell and Jocelyn Hernandez enjoy a dance during the pow-wow.

Left: Elaine Thomas (left) and Kaye Stainbrook take Julian Cordova around the dance arena.

Harjo receives Presidential Medal of Freedom, nation's highest civilian honor

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama has named 19 distinguished individuals as recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Among the recipients of this prestigious award is Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee), president of The Morning Star Institute since its inception in 1984.

The Medal of Freedom, established by President John F. Kennedy in 1963, is the nation's highest civilian honor bestowed to individuals who have made especially meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, to world peace or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors.

Harjo's career has spanned decades of involvement in indigenous human rights issues and causes. Her traditional knowl-

edge, extensive capacity for research regarding indigenous cultures and her indomitable spirit have led her to significant victories in non-Native arenas, including congressional and administrative venues.

She was executive director of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) from 1984 through 1989 and continues to serve as co-chair of the NCAI Subcommittee on Human, Religious and Cultural Concerns.

She is a founder of the National Museum of the American Indian and guest curator and general editor of the exhibit and book, *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations*.

As a member of the Carter administration and as current president of The

Morning Star Institute, Harjo has been a key figure in many important Indian legislative battles, including the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

"We are extremely proud of Suzan Harjo and her continued and profound advocacy on behalf of Native peoples. Her commitment to preserve and protect Native human remains, cultural patrimony, sacred places and sovereignty is well-known throughout Indian Country," said NCAI President Brian Cladoosby. "Today is a great day for Native peoples and we celebrate and honor our friend and colleague, a former director of NCAI, for her achievements and recognition by the president for her exceptional meritorious service."

Harjo also is a longtime member of the Native American Rights Fund family and she previously served as a legislative liaison for NARF.

NARF Executive Director John Echohawk congratulated Harjo on the award, saying "This honor means that Suzan is one of the greatest fighters for Native American rights in history."

Medal of Freedom recipients are selected by the president, either on his own initiative or based on recommendations, and this year's list includes Alvin Ailey, Tom Brokaw, Patsy Mink, Ethel Kennedy, Charles Sifford, Meryl Streep and Stevie Wonder.

This year's awards were presented at the White House on Nov. 24.