



Courtesy photo

Left to right: Tony Walters executive director, National American Indian Housing Council; Sami Jo Difuntorum, former NAIHC chairwoman; Gary Cooper, NAIHC chairman; and Carol Gore, president/CEO of Cook Inlet Housing Authority

Difuntorum receives lifetime achievement award from national Indian housing organization

By Diane Rodriguez

Sami Jo Difuntorum, executive director of the Siletz Tribal Housing Department, received a lifetime achievement award from the National American Indian Housing Council at the organization's annual convention and tradeshow in late May.

Difuntorum (Kwekaeke band of Shasta) recently completed four years as the chairwoman of NAIHC. She has 24 years of experience in Tribal housing, which includes providing testimony to Congress during the reauthorization of the Native American Housing and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA), representing NAIHC at the first Tribal leader meeting with the White House, membership on the Indian Housing Block Grant Formula Negotiated Rulemaking Committee, developing multiple residential communities and administrative offices, and Region VI representative to the NAIHC's Unexpended Funds Workgroup.

"I was very honored and humbled to receive the Virginia Kizer award. It was particularly nice to receive this from my colleagues on the board for whom I have the upmost respect," said Difuntorum.

The award was presented by Gary Cooper (Cherokee), newly elected NAIHC chairman, and Carol Gore (Ninilchik Village), Region IX representative for NAIHC. Their presentation reads as follows:

The Virginia Kizer award is a lifetime achievement award given to a woman in Indian housing.

On behalf of the 267 members of NAIHC representing 467 Tribes and hous-

ing organizations, the NAIHC Board is extremely pleased to present the Virginia Kizer lifetime achievement award. This award is being given to a member who wants no recognition, but is so deserving of this award – we are very pleased to honor our outgoing chair, Sami Jo Difuntorum, with this prestigious award.

Sami Jo provided leadership in a number of roles, including the Lincoln Community Development Corporation, Northwest Indian Housing Association, Southwest Indian Housing Association, Formula Negotiated Rulemaking Committee and most recently as our chair and the chair of the NCAI Housing Committee.

She approached the position of NAIHC chair as a way to bring everyone together with a unified voice in Washington, D.C., and a plan to provide NAIHC's members with a sustainable organization. With her leadership and her Tribe's very significant financial support, she has made a lasting impact to NAIHC and its members.

Sami Jo brought meaningful change to the NAIHC that resulted in administrative efficiencies, reduced overhead, deeper investments in members through the training and technical assistance program resulting in a stable and healthy financial future for our organization. The last piece of her puzzle was to establish an operating reserve to provide NAIHC with a safety net in an unstable funding environment.

Perhaps most important of all is Sami Jo's tireless advocacy for Indian housing

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Photo by Andrea Taylor

Healyah Butler, Danica Lundy and Anastasia Zigler walk toward the stage at the beginning of their graduation ceremony at Siletz Valley Early College Academy on June 2. See more graduates on pages 10-11.



Courtesy photo from OCCC

Tribal Council member Gloria Ingle accepts the Friends of the College Award from Dr. Birgitte Ryslinge, president of Oregon Coast Community College, during the college's graduation ceremony on June 16.

OCCC presents Friend of the College Award to Tribe

Each year, Oregon Coast Community College selects a community member or organization to receive the Friend of the College Award. The purpose of this award is to recognize those who have made significant contributions in furthering the vision, mission, values and goals of our college.

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians is a confederation of more than 27

ancestral Tribes and Bands, speaking 10 completely different languages, who were removed to the Siletz Reservation from all parts of Western Oregon west of the Cascade Range summit, the lower Columbia River in Southwest Washington, and the Upper Klamath River, Shasta and Scott River Valleys, Smith River and Crescent

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