

News Release

National American Indian Housing Council
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Individual Development Accounts Can Help Self-Determining Tribes Promote Homeownership

DENVER, CO (10-9-06) — For those Indian tribes with sufficient housing administrative capacity, Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) can effectively help low- to moderate-income tribal members save money for homeownership, according to **Susan Hammer**, a member of the Board of Directors of the **National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC)**. Speaking today at an NAIHC special seminar titled “IDAs for Tribal Homeownership Programs,” Hammer extolled the necessity and the virtues of tribal self-determination, and discussed homeownership in terms of wealth creation, explaining how IDAs can provide a vital link.

“IDAs fit perfectly into our desire to take care of our own needs without government involvement or intervention,” said Hammer, who is also Executive Director of Ute Tribal Housing Authority in Utah. “IDAs really align with our philosophy to determine our own future in regard to homeownership. And homeownership is a sure way to also further self-determination, as homeownership is one major source of equity for small businesses, the major source, according to federal data.”

IDAs are designed to provide not only assistance but also incentives to people who otherwise do not have the means to save for downpayments and other costs associated with homebuying, as Hammer explained.

“The beauty of IDAs is the matching funds provided by some banks and outside entities, such as NeighborWorks, represented here as well, to help foster that savings mentality.” The match can be 2:1, 3:1, or even 4:1, meaning people can as much as quadruple their money, she explained.

Bucking a Trend of Negative Savings

Which is especially valuable given that, last year, the national savings rate fell below zero percent—the lowest since the Great Depression, noted **Jane DeMarines**, NAIHC’s Director of External Relations and conference organizer. Pending legislation, the Savings for Working Families Act of 2005 (H.R. 4751), would provide tax credits for banks and other financial institutions that match the savings of qualified customers through IDAs, she reported.

The White Mountain Apache and Salt River tribes, both slated to make presentations at the conference (which will go until Wednesday), are among several that have successfully implemented IDA programs to spur homeownership in their communities, Hammer acknowledged. “So homeownership can help start tribal businesses, or can be the nest egg for retirement, or be a wealth accumulation strategy, and something to pass on to one’s children,” she said.

“We are pleased to have so many collaborators with us today,” said DeMarines, acknowledging long-term partners such as Fred Lambricht of the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco and Peter Morris of First Nations Development Institute, as well as GreenPoint Mortgage, represented by Chris White.

‘Housing First’ Campaign Promotes Tribal Homeownership

The IDA conference is an activity of NAIHC’s “**Housing First for First Americans**” 10-year campaign to help tribes provide 100,000 additional housing units, and is being sponsored by its “Housing First” partners: Wells Fargo Housing Foundation, Washington Mutual Bank, Fannie Mae, PMI Mortgage Insurance, KeyBank, and the Federal Home Loan Banks, including the San Francisco bank’s specific sponsorship of a networking reception.

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*The National American Indian Housing Council assists tribes and tribal housing entities in reaching their self-determined goals of providing culturally relevant, decent, safe, sanitary, and quality affordable housing for Native people in Indian communities and Alaska Native villages. “A Tradition of Native American Housing” * www.naihc.net*