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NAIHC Attends White House Tribal Nations Conference in Washington, DC

Housing and community development recommendations presented.

WASHINGTON—November 5, 2009—The National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) Board Member Sami Jo Difuntorum attended the White House Tribal Nations Conference today in Washington, DC, to represent Native American housing and community development issues. President Barack Obama fulfilled his promise to Indian Country by inviting a representative from every federally recognized tribe to attend the conference, and share their recommendations on issues important to Indian Country.

Offering nearly 45 minutes of his time this morning, President Obama expressed his dedication and commitment to upholding the U.S. treaty obligations with tribal nations. He said today's summit is not just lip service but rather the beginning of meaningful partnerships with tribes. To a chorus of applause that echoed through the Department of Interior auditorium President Obama said, "You will not be forgotten as long as I am in the White House."

"This is a historic time for all tribal nations. I am honored to present the housing needs to President Obama on behalf of Indian Country," said Difuntorum, also the executive director of the Karuk Housing Authority in California. "As many tribal members know, housing conditions in our communities are substandard. There needs to be a thorough assessment of the conditions and strategic solutions put forth on a national level, starting with the support of the Obama Administration."

NAIHC, the only national Indian organization solely advocating on tribal housing, recommends to the Administration that it create and oversee an interagency Native American Housing Task Force made up of Federal agencies and tribal entities to enhance the Federal programs and services in housing development of Native American communities.

"There is multitude of infrastructure needs when building homes on Indian lands – plumbing, electricity, roads – which require cooperation and communication with a number of different Federal agencies and departments," Difuntorum said. "We need to enhance the process to expedite housing development and quickly move Native American people into safe, affordable and healthy homes."

NAIHC also recommends that the Administration support all efforts to ensure that the *Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act* reaches its full potential for all Indian tribes. NAIHC urges that Indian housing and community development be included in any discussions on economic development in Indian Country.

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