



**Press Release**

*Bill Wortley, bwortley@wshfc.org*

**Native American Honored for Remarkable Achievements in Affordable Housing**

*Spokane, Wash.* —Sept. 28, 2011— The Washington State Housing Finance Commission presented a *2011 Friend of Housing Award* to Elena Bassett at the Davenport Hotel in Spokane during the annual *Housing Washington* conference.

“Elena casts her safety net far and wide to bring affordable housing to tribal communities in Colville and beyond,” said Washington State Housing Finance Commission Executive Director Kim Herman. “According to her colleagues, she is a tough negotiator and will settle for nothing less than excellence in securing support for affordable housing.”

Bassett is innovative in packaging financing mechanisms for affordable housing in Indian Country and encourages greater self-sufficiency among tribal members. This is a complicated process, compounded by the great distance most reservations are from cities and industrial centers, plus local labor, materials and supplies are difficult to find and more expensive.

She achieves this through her membership in many organizations. Bassett is the executive director of the Colville Indian Housing Authority, or CIHA, and a member of the

confederated tribes of the Yakama Nation. She is the vice chair of the Northwest Indian Housing Association and sits on the housing committee for the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. She is also a voting member on the National American Indian Housing Council, a non-profit organization representing 463 tribes and housing organizations and advocates on behalf of American Indian affordable housing interests.

According to colleagues, Bassett is a tireless advocate for tribal members and has become a knowledgeable resource of financing mechanisms, such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, which has been used to improve the lives of tribal members across the state and region. She has organized conferences and seminars to educate her fellow tribal members on the variety of affordable housing options available.

Bassett has created 45 tax credit units in two projects, in addition to rehabilitating and maintaining the other rental and homeownership units managed by CIHA.

Bassett's expertise and dedication have been recognized by HUD, Key Bank, and Washington Mutual Bank to name a few.

The Colville Reservation is spread over 1.4 million acres, located about two hours north and west of Spokane. While housing is essential for tribal members, there is also a critical need for housing for professionals who do not want a daily commute from Spokane. Bassett, along with her tribal council and housing board, saw this need and combined funding from

the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program, the Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program, and CIHA's annual allocation of NAHASDA funding to build 27 homes in the Inchelium Community.

All of these homes will be extremely energy efficient and include passive solar heating, Energy Star construction certification and appliances, and water-conserving fixtures. HUD has recognized that the project "...is on the cutting edge of many of the initiatives and priorities of HUD."

Three of these homes will be available for doctors or nurses to live near their work at the Roosevelt Community Health Center, thus avoiding a lengthy commute. Another four homes will be available for purchase by tribal members through HUD's Section 184 Indian Loan Guarantee Program. The remaining 20 homes are available for rent by low- and moderate-income tribal members who will have the option to purchase the homes after 15 years.

"Bassett is remarkable in having brought communities together in the successful completion of safe and affordable housing," said Herman.

###