

News Release
National American Indian Housing Council



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Chippewa Activist Inspires Indian Housing Convention Attendees with His Life Story
Full slate of speakers includes dignitaries from the host state of Hawaii, Indian housing

HONOLULU—May 22, 2006—Who better to inspire Indian housing professionals than a Native American who's overcome more than his share of severe personal disadvantages?

That's what more than 800 attendees got this morning at the opening session of the **National American Indian Housing Council's** 32nd Anniversary Convention, from **Dr. Don Bartlette**, keynote speaker who presented his highly acclaimed autobiographical profile. "Macaroni at Midnight" is about Bartlette's experiences as a Chippewa Indian growing up with emotional, speech, and physical disabilities amid poverty, household violence, juvenile delinquency, child abuse, racism, and alcoholism. Bartlette called on the Indian housing leaders to remember the struggles of all Indian children as they went about working to improve Indian housing.

"I grew up in a home without electricity, running water or warmth. I learned how Native children craved that warmth," said Bartlette. "There are many homes out there that are unsafe and inadequate and many Native children are still facing these odds. Remember who you are and why you are here, to help those children."

A full-time public speaker and activist, Dr. Bartlette aims to help professionals, parents, and youth to understand the power that persons have to make a difference in the lives of others. Although he has shared his presentation more than 5,000 times throughout the continent since 1972, Bartlette goes through lengths to preserve a spontaneous element so as to maximize its emotional impact.

NAIHC Chairman Links Native Hawaiian and Indian Struggles in Final Address

In his final address as **NAIHC Chairman, Chester Carl** noted that Native Americans and Native Hawaiians both have similar goals and struggles in their housing needs. Carl's term will end at **NAIHC's** Annual Business Meeting on May 24, 2006.

"We are the indigenous people to this land. We are of like conscience, we are small, but we are not the minority, for our brothers are the entire natural world and we are by far the majority," said **Carl**. "It is a time to be strong, a time to think of the future and to challenge all destruction to our homes and environment for our grandchildren."

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Also providing inspiration at the nation's largest annual gathering of Indian housing professionals were **Linda Lingle**, Governor of Hawaii, the first woman to hold that position; and **Orlando Cabrera**, Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

During her first term as Governor, Lingle has substantively helped the indigenous people of her state. Under her leadership, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands has awarded more residential leases and provided more families with opportunities for homeownership than in the entire decade of the 1990s.

“We have started providing homes to Native Hawaiians who have been on a waiting list, sometimes for decades. One woman had been on the list since 1976. Over 30 years she had been waiting for a home and finally got one when she was selected in 2006,” said Lingle. “We are making a difference and that is why we are here.”

Lingle also expressed her gratitude to Indian Country for supporting federal recognition for Native Hawaiians. “Some might say this could take from [Native Americans] but you knew it was the right thing to do and you stood up for Native Hawaiians. We appreciate what you did for us.”

At HUD, Cabrera represents the Administration in guiding the largest federal Indian housing funding program, including the block grants and set-asides for Native Americans and Native Hawaiians. He noted that data could be the key tool in improving Indian housing.

“I think a lot about when to approach a problem and what makes sense to do or not to do. Data is a tool that has an implication, and getting correct data is important,” Cabrera said. “Figuring out what the issues are, what are apparent and what are not. This will come to light through data.”

HUD's Section 184a Native Hawaiian Loan Guarantee program has been appropriated fairly steadily since FY2002 in the range of \$880,000 to \$1.035 million. In its FY07 budget request, the Administration has proposed just over \$1 million for the program to provide up to \$43 million in guarantee authority in support of the State of Hawaii's goal to increase homeownership among Native Hawaiians, Cabrera testified to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs earlier this year.

“While **NAIHC** helps Indian housing professionals by building their technical capacity to do housing, speakers like Dr. Bartlette and the others here today really light an essential fire in us all that spurs us to persevere, to reach new heights of excellence,” said **Gary L. Gordon**, **NAIHC** Executive Director.

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NAIHC 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.

NAIHC... “A Tradition of Native American Housing”

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