

TRIBAL IT DIRECTOR RECEIVES STATEWIDE HONOR, APPOINTED TO NATIONAL FCC TASK FORCE

PLUMMER – The Coeur d’Alene Tribe’s Information and Technology Director Valerie Fast Horse was given the “Women Making History” award by the Boise State Women’s Center.

Since 2001, as part of the Women’s History Month celebration, the Boise State Women’s Center has honored more than 250 women making history: ordinary women leading extraordinary lives. This year, the center has honored 15 more women — positive role models nominated for changing the course of history in the state of Idaho.

“It means a lot to be recognized as a woman making history because traditionally the technology field is a male-dominated industry,” Fast Horse said. “I was very surprised to be nominated and it hasn’t sunk in that I am an honoree. I just do what is in front me and I love doing it.”

Fast Horse recently was appointed to serve on the new FCC-Native Nations Broadband Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of elected and appointed leaders from across the Native Nations and senior staff and decision-makers from across the Commission.

“She is a technological visionary for the Coeur d’Alene Tribe and understands the role information sharing plays in our local and national economy,” said Coeur d’Alene Tribe Chairman Chief Allan. “Her efforts have opened many doors on the reservation.”

Her goal is to preserve the heritage and culture of the Tribe through technology and has pioneered numerous projects to accomplish that end.

Fast Horse credited her mother for her successes.

“I wouldn’t be who I am without my mom’s strength. I wasn’t born this way, I was raised this way,” Fast Horse said.

Fast Horse’s drive and determination have brought much needed internet services to the rural Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation, located in northern Idaho, said Allan.

“She is helping Tribes overcome obstacles to bridge the digital divide in Indian Country,” Allan said.

Her latest project is ambitious as it is vital. She is heading up the Tribe’s \$12.2 million project to make available fiber optic cables to every home, business and anchor institution on the reservation. This project is going to serve 3,500 households with high-speed services.

Fast Horse is launching a Native American radio station KWIS FM 88.3 that will provide content for families living on the rural reservation. The station is scheduled to deliver news and cultural programs, including music and storytelling.

Fast Horse created Rezkast.com, a web site that allows Native Americans across North America to network, share stories, music and videos. Rezkast has roughly 1,700 members.

Sonya Rosario, who nominated Fast Horse for the award, described her as a dynamic individual.

“She has the heart of a lion,” Rosario said. “She is an incredible woman and is an incredible asset to Idaho, not just her tribe.”

She is a former Tribal Council member who served for six years. In 2001, she was nominated and served for six years as the co-chair of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest

Indians Telecommunications and Utility Subcommittee. She is an active participant of the Telecommunications Subcommittee of the National Congress of American Indians. She has provided testimony to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on the Status of Telecommunications in Indian Country. In 2009, she provided input from a tribal perspective as a panelist in the ARRA Broadband Field hearings and at the Internet Innovation Alliance symposium. She also submitted written comments on the National Broadband Strategy and has been a steady participant in the FCC's annual Tribal Dialogue sessions and the Indian Telecommunications Initiative Roundtable workshops.

Fast Horse is a veteran of the U.S. Army. She served in Operation Desert Storm, helping provide communications and information for the entire theater of war.

Fast Horse led the effort to secure a \$3.5 million tribal and federal grant dollars that gave broadband services to residents living on the 345,000 acre reservation in 2002. She also helped build the Tribe's Community Technology Center that provides free computer use for reservation residents, as well as providing computer classes and video production in 2005.

Other honorees include Amy Trice of the Kootenai Tribe, Kelly Arendt, Denice Goodrich Liley, Concepcion Yeng Chi Martinez, Lizzy Naughton, Tia Short and Karen Uehling.