



Washington and Northern Idaho District Council of Laborers

P.O. Box 12917, Mill Creek, WA 98082

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Contact: Bob McBain, Lead Organizer
WA & N. ID District Council of Laborers
Phone: 425-741-3556

Laborers' Union Tribal Liaison to be Honored by DOL Women's Bureau

MILL CREEK, WA – The US Department of Labor's Women's Bureau will be honoring the Washington and Northern Idaho District Council of Laborers' Tribal Liaison, Sherry Barry, on October 27th at a meeting of the United Indians of All Tribes in Seattle. The Women's Bureau's formal agenda is to honor and celebrate Native American women and their accomplishments.

The Women's Bureau chose Barry, a member of the Quinault Indian Nation, because of her commitment to encouraging women tribal members to follow her example and join their Local Laborers' Union and improve the quality of their lives with family supporting wages and good benefits. She has also been instrumental in working with the United Indians of All Tribes as a member of their Board of Directors bringing a union perspective to the inherent unemployment problem Native Americans face making them of the highest in jobless ratings. She has further been recognized as a passionate counselor and mentor to many individual tribal members looking to find sustainable careers.

After struggling in minimum wage positions as a single mother of three and then, after re-marrying and having two more children, Barry knew she had to do something to help improve her family's situation. Barry joined the Laborers Apprenticeship Program in 1997 to help provide a better life for her family. Doing well in the verbal interview and then demonstrating her physical ability in a week-long pre-construction class at the Northwest Laborers' Training Center, she started her career as an apprentice. It was at this point she became a proud new member of Laborers' Local 252. Soon she was earning good pay and benefits while learning everything she could as a Construction Craft Laborer.

After a number of years in the field, Barry was invited to join the Union's leadership, becoming an auditor within her Local, and subsequently a member of the Local's executive board. In 2005 she was hired by the Washington and Northern Idaho District Council of Laborers as an Organizer. As she proved her abilities in working with people no matter their position, her capacity as Organizer was expanded to be the District Council's first statewide Tribal Liaison. As Tribal Liaison, Barry works with all thirty Native American tribes in Washington State and provides an interface with the various local unions comprising the Washington and Northern Idaho District Council of Laborers. Barry says "I attribute any successes I've had throughout this journey back to all of the support I've received from those I worked with in the field to everyone I work with now."

"Sherry has been a model union member for us. She worked her way up through the ranks while providing a better quality of life for her family. She's a true success story who continues to develop." commented David Letinich, Business Manager for the Washington and Northern Idaho District Council of Laborers. "We asked her to join our staff with the intention of doing outreach to women and Native Americans who want to start a career in construction. Sherry is living proof there are no barriers in our organization if you work hard and believe in yourself."

The Washington and Northern Idaho District Council of Laborers represent 12 Union Locals across their region with 12,400 active and retired members. The Laborers Union Locals themselves represent Construction Craft Laborers as the majority of their membership, as well as a wide variety of industry sectors including health care, public employees, resort & maintenance and public schools.

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