



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA RECOGNIZES THERESA SECORD AS MINORITY SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE

Augusta, Maine - Theresa Secord, Executive Director of the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance (MIBA) is the recipient of the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) 2004 Maine Minority Business Advocate of the Year award. Secord was nominated for this award by Jean Casey of the Maine Small Business Development Center.

Theresa Secord a member of the Penobscot Nation, has been working diligently to help improve the life and cultural tradition of Maine's Indian basket-makers. As Executive Director and a founding member of the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance (MIBA), Secord established a basket weaving apprentice program, specialized workshops, and a variety of wholesale and retail connections to provide Maine's Native Americans with an opportunity to learn and perpetuate the craft. This provided them with income while enhancing their Native American cultural traditions.

Since MIBA's founding in 1993, the number of trained tribal basketmakers has grown from 50 to 120.

In 2001, under the leadership of Secord, the MIBA opened a gallery in Old Town where 40 basketmakers and 20 other Native American artisans are represented. Sales for 2003 exceeded the initial projections.

MIBA worked with the Maine Small Business Development Center (Maine SBDC) through the Business LINC program. Through Business LINC, business-to-business relationships are formed by creating linkages between mentor and protégé companies. The mentor through LINC stressed the value of a web site. The gallery is currently working on a web site to further promote the art and to provide additional income for basketmakers.

Secord will be recognized at the SBA awards celebration May 25th at Spectacular Event Center in Bangor. For further information on the award winners or the award celebration contact Bonnie Erickson at 622-8275 or Sandra Fontaine at 622-8381.