

Rural seniors being considered for repair grant

by Cynthia Stowell

The "forgotten" senior citizens are raising their voices and making their needs known. The result may be a \$25,000 budget add-on for home repairs and maintenance.

An unanticipated by-product of the new senior citizens housing project was the realization by the majority of seniors living outside the complex that they were not receiving some of the benefits of their newly-housed peers. Rents and repairs for the twenty new tribally-owned homes are provided for the residents.

But 78% of the senior citizens live in other housing and are responsible for their own maintenance, rent or house payments. A survey done by the Planning department revealed that almost one-quarter of the seniors' homes in community and rural areas are sub-standard and in need of repair. But only 3% of the seniors are employed, relying for their income on per capita, tribal pensions, and/or social security.

A public hearing was held August 1 after the senior citizens luncheon to air the feelings of seniors about proposed tribal funding for home maintenance. Speaking primarily in their own language with interpretation by Tribal Councilman Delbert Frank, the old folks were quite vocal about their needs.

Many bemoaned the poor construction of their homes—"just thrown together any old way," said Stella McKinley. Matilda Mitchell and Linton Winishut pointed to the lack of storage space for their valued possessions. Some worried



SEEING STARS — Susan Moses described the condition of her roof by saying she could see stars through it. The senior citizen has lived in a sub-standard home owned by her daughter since vandals mader her Simnasho home unlivable years ago. Susan hopes to qualify for proposed repair and maintenance monies.

about being cold this winter. Susan Moses and Florence Meanus both complained that their vandalized houses had not been repaired.

Seniors did not appear to be interested in leaving their rural property for new housing and seemed not to want rental units. Ellen Squiemphen even went so far as to say that the younger people have more critical housing needs and that old folks would be passing on soon anyway, so why worry about them?

But a good portion of the senior citizens had questions

pertaining to eligibility for the special fund. "I'm still paying for my home. Am I eligible?" or "My family lives with me. Can I qualify for repairs?" were among the questions.

As explained by the Planning Department, the proposed monies would be available through the end of the year to all seniors who are tribal members and are not living in the new complex. Funds presently available through the Housing promise, Improvement Program and the Farmers Home Administration

would be tapped first, with the tribal monies as an alternative source.

Applications for assistance would be made to the Health and Welfare Committee, the condition of the home would be determined by a team of tribal, BIA and IHS evaluators, and the committee would take action. So far, eligibility criteria have not been pinned down, said a planning department representative.

The need for tribal monies for senior citizens homes was

recently dramatized by the case of Andrew David, who sought to rebuild the ceremonial wing of his house at Dry Creek. Having received what he considered to be a promise for funds from a staff person in the planning department, David began to dismantle the eastern end of his home. But because of confusion about the title to the land, the assistance was not forthcoming.

Bitter about the unfulfilled "promise," David pressed the issue. Finally with the proper letter from the realty office confirming his ownership of the land, \$5,000 became available through the Farmers Home Administration. Another \$5,000 is now being sought for the balance of the renovation. The aging religious man had come close to shutting his doors to ceremonial gatherings while the funding picture looked bleak.

The proposed funding would ensure speedy response to seniors' requests for repairs, since they would be handled in-house, said a planning department spokesman. An inventory of need will have to be taken and priorities established before the funds can be fairly expended, he added, commenting that \$25,000 is not going to go very far. That is the largest sum Tribal Council can add to the budget without a popular referendum.

A drafted resolution should be presented to Tribal Council sometime this month. It is expected that Council will not only act on 1979 needs but also give consideration to an ongoing budget line item for senior citizen home repairs.

NIAA helping to push scouting for Indian boys

A major effort to spur increased use of the Scouting program among American Indian youth was announced this week.

The Boy Scouts of America in cooperation with the National Indian Activities Association has established the American Indian Scouting Outreach Program. Two other groups assisting with the project are the Idaho Inter-Tribal Policy Board and the Indian and Native American Programs office of the U.S. Department of Labor.

According to Pete Homer, Jr., president of the National Indian Activities Association, the project is designed to "develop the capacity of Indian communities to use the Scouting programs to serve Indian youth." BSA officials estimate that about 1,000 native Americans currently are associated with the Boy Scout program.

The project also is designed to develop, through collaboration between local Indian tribal and community groups and local Boy Scout councils, community-based support services to help ensure continuity of the program.

James A. Hess, veteran professional Scouter, will serve as executive director of the

program for 13 months through September 1980. Hess, who has been director of BSA's Community Relationships Service will be headquartered in South Brunswick, N.J. and will work with Indian communities in the eastern states.

Assisting Hess will be two American Indian associates, still to be named, who will be headquartered in the NIAA office in Oklahoma City. They will work with selected Indian communities west of the Mississippi River.

Hess noted that "it has been the desire of the Boy Scouts of America to find acceptable ways to help American Indian youth achieve some of their important citizenship goals through Scouting."

Since 1957, the BSA has provided national staff services to Indian communities, and for several years there was a full-time staff member assigned. There is also an active American Indian Relationships Committee, headed by Brantley Blue, of Washington D.C. During the past five years this committee has sought outside funding for the additional support now announced.

Five specific goals are seen,



Alternative Feast

Andrew David hosted his own huckleberry feast for friends and family July 29 in the partially dismantled ceremonial wing of his home at Dry Creek. David, who was awaiting funds to complete the renovation, has been given the go-ahead and the temporary walls erected for the feast will be torn down again. The feast was an alternative to the HeHe celebration, which he and others do not feel comfortable attending.

Spilyay Tymoo Photo by Stowell

according to Hess and Homer.

The outreach program will serve to develop a deeper understanding by tribal leaders of the need for a greater "push" for Scouting programs for Indian youth. It will develop an increased awareness on the part of volunteer and professional Scouters that American Indian youth can and will be

benefitted by Scouting programs.

It will develop stronger communication links between local tribal leaders and local Scouting council personnel. It will develop workable patterns of operation needed to support scouting on Indian reservations and in urban areas having concentrations of Indians. And

it will increase the number of Indian youth within the Scouting membership and the number of tribal chartered Scouting units.

Kenneth Gould, acting executive director of NIAA, and Lonnie Racehorse, director of the Idaho Inter-Tribal Policy Board also have cooperated in arrangements.