

Linda Layden Hits the Road; Going North to Canada

■ An inspired force for Tribal housing, Layden built a lasting base for the future.

By Ron Karten

After nine years leading the Tribal housing program, Linda Layden is moving on.

"It is time for others to carry on," she said from her new office in the Tribal Housing Authority's new building, a beautiful remembrance of her last project with the Tribe. It opened in January.

This last project also includes the soon-to-be-finished 36-unit rentals for low-income Tribal members. Along with *Ilip Tilixam*, the 38-unit Elder housing project, *Cxi Alta Ileptatuwa*, the 36-lot Grand Meadows home ownership project, and a number of valuable Tribal grant programs, Layden took the Tribe from literally ground zero to a housing foundation the Tribe now takes great pride in.

"Even though Linda did nine years here, her work will be able to be seen for many years to come," said Tribal Council Vice Chairman Reyn Leno.

"I'd like to do an acknowledgement of Linda's accomplishments and a thank you as the Board Chair for the visual accomplishment of the department that she built over the last nine years," said Tribal member Tim Holmes, Chairman of the Housing Authority's Board of Directors. "You may have moved on but you will be remembered by the good work you did."

She came to the Tribe in 1994 after more than 20 years of developing housing and home repairs for programs across Oregon and Washington. She built the staff, which started with just herself and Tribal member Lonnie Leno, and is now nine positions strong. She created the Tribal Housing Authority Board, an active, industry-wise and committed group that has guided the process. And she initiated the 1995 housing study that set the direction for all of the success that followed.

"Housing was kind of off on its own for the first few years," said Leno. "When we started

the projects, and all that HUD money came through, it became apparent how hard she had been working."

"She was a very determined administrator," said Tribal Elder Bob Watson, first chairman of the Tribal Housing Authority Board of Directors, who also went on to Chair the Gaming Authority and run the casino. "I think she understood what the Tribes' needs were. "She understood the federal role, the state role, the county role; she understood all those roles and helped the Tribe get through all those requirements. I think we're really indebted to her on these projects."

Watson credited Layden with being the first in the country to make project-sized use of the Section 184 federal loans, which for the first time enabled Indians to buy homes on Tribal lands. And he also credited her with guiding NAHASDA into being. NAHASDA is the federal law which provides housing grants to Tribes across the country.

She calls the Elder Housing project, "the jewel" of her efforts, not only because it honored many of those who had waited a lifetime for an opportunity to live on the Reservation, but also because she recognized that many Elders were quickly aging even as the project was in process.

Layden credits staff and board members and the support of Tribal Council for the success she

felt as she finished her tenure with the Tribe.

Layden also felt good about the Authority's outside relationships. "We have a good reputation with HUD (the federal Housing and Urban Development Department) and the other Tribal Housing Authorities."

Federal funding for Tribes is allotted by formula, according to Layden, and the vagueries of history have left this Tribe so short of housing that federal funding has been better for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR) than for many other Tribes. In fact, CTGR has received about \$25 million from HUD during Layden's tenure and spent or assigned about \$12 million.

Future projects may nevertheless be on hold in the area because of regional land use pressures and state water shortages. Upcoming projects including a foster home for Elders and an Elder Community Center, scheduled for this year, may already have run into some of these roadblocks, said Layden.

Other possible directions include reaching out to develop projects beyond Grand Ronde and expanding subsidy programs within and beyond the ten local counties.

"My intent is to maximize the use of HUD funds, including down payment assistance, closing cost assistance, interest subsidies, rehabilitation subsidies and rental assistance subsidies," said Assistant Housing Director Greg Martin, who has been named interim director.

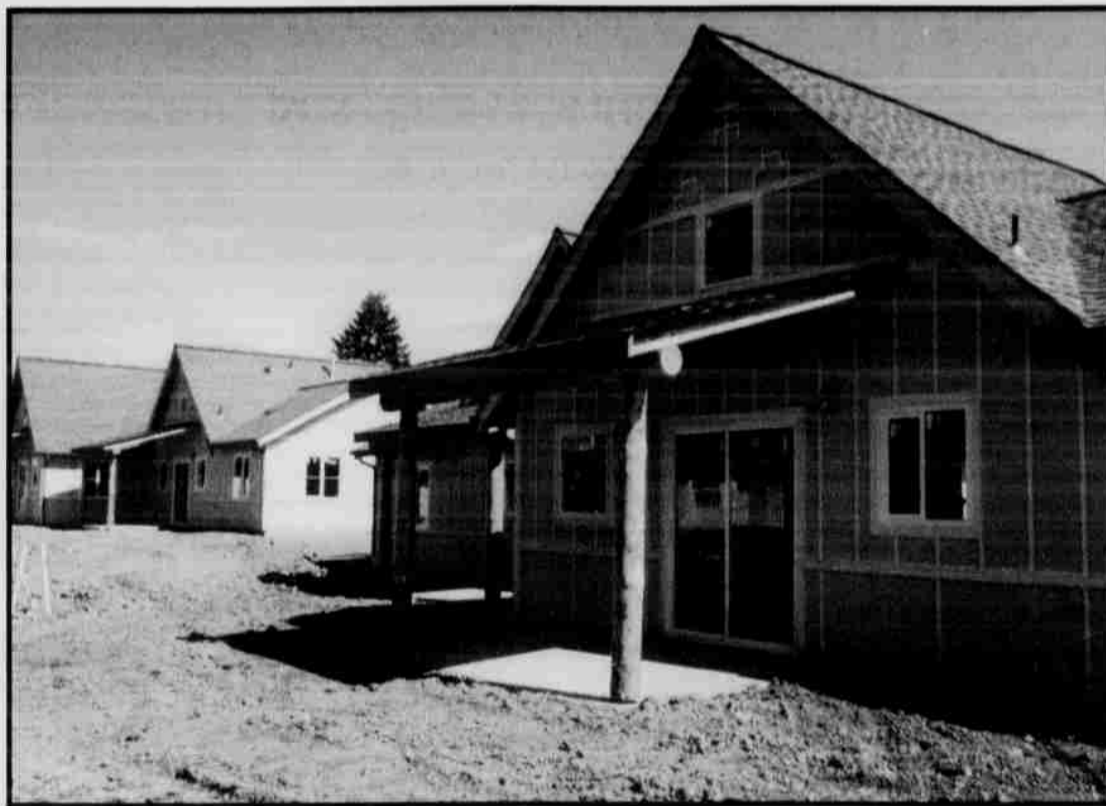
But these are projects for the future. "I accomplished all that I originally set out to do," Layden said. "We've accomplished home ownership, housing for Elders and with the new project, housing for families."

Layden plans to move to Canada with her husband, who is Canadian.

"It has been an honor and a privilege to have worked with the Tribe," she said.



Central Gathering Area — The Tribe's new housing will be built around a central gathering area located in the middle of the family units. The project is being constructed using federal money provided by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds. Each home will have its own fenced backyard and carport. All of the houses are handicapped accessible and two of the units are completely handicapped equipped with lowered counters and handrails. The homes are designed to be energy efficient, with double pane windows and radiant floor heating. There are bike and footpaths throughout and a large playground.



Photos by
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