

“People Can Start Coming Home”

■ Tribe’s new housing dedicated with ceremony, tour.

By Peta Tinda

The first phase in a longtime Tribal plan to provide quality affordable housing for Tribal members was officially enacted with the dedication of the new 36 unit Tribal housing development in Grand Ronde, on Thursday, June 26, 2003.

Its name, “Chxi Musam Illihi,” means “A New Sleeping Place,” in Chinuk wawa.

“I think that we finally achieved a goal that we set many years ago about building nice housing for Tribal members,” said Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority Chair Tim Holmes.

Even before restoration, Holmes said, Tribal members expressed their need of quality housing.

“We tried to build it to promote a sense of community,” said Holmes. “And also to provide an opportunity for Indian people to be a part of the greater Tribal community.”

There has always been a chronic shortage of housing in Indian Country and Grand Ronde is no exception. Over 100 Tribal members applied for the 36 available homes. The Tribal Housing Authority is acutely aware of this fact and has plans to build two more similar housing developments in the near future.

“It’s just one piece in a bigger picture,” said Holmes.

Tribal members could be moving into their new homes as soon as July 16, said Tribal Housing Development and Construction Coordinator Duane Hussey. Since the complex is intended for low-income families, a resident’s rent will not exceed 30 percent of their income. The housing complex was funded entirely with United States Housing and Urban Development grants.

It is made up of mostly single and duplex houses, grouped around a covered central meeting place with

a fire pit and a toddler playground.

Each house has its own carport, fenced back yard and individual deck patio with roof.

All of the houses are equipped with new Kenmore washers, dryers, dishwashers, ranges and refrigerators.

Handicapped accessibility was designed into the entire complex. The homes are all one story, eliminating the need for steps. All of the doorways are at least 36 inches wide, for wheelchairs. Two of the

pane windows. They also have radiant floor heating, where hot water from the water heater is pumped through a seamless, continuous tube, embedded in the concrete. Since the system uses fresh water, it increases the amount of hot water available to residents by several times over a conventional water heater. The system also saves energy and makes for a nice warm floor in the winter.

To ease the burden on the local municipal water supply, all of the rainwater that falls on the complex

is collected and stored in an adjacent 90,000-gallon underground storage tank. The water will then be used for landscaping and irrigation. The housing complex has broad, well-lit streets and sidewalks.

The attractive countryside setting, with its spectacular views of Spirit Mountain and the Grand Ronde Valley, appealed to many.

“It’s so nature-like,” said Marcella Norwest, one of the Tribal members on the waiting list for the new housing. Norwest applied for a 5-bedroom house for her and her four grandchildren, but wasn’t sure if she met the requirements. Still, she said, she was hopeful that her application would be accepted.

“It looks like it would be a good place to bring kids up. There’s no traffic, and that’s good. I think that this will help everybody to get to know everyone better,” said Norwest. “It will be good change for Tribal families, and for the future.”

Many who were present at the dedication expressed the same sentiment. Tribal Elder Norma Lee was there and had this to say:

“We waited a long time for this,” said Lee. “I’m real proud of what they’ve been doing for the people...I’m glad people can start coming home.”



Photo by Peta Tinda

No Longer A Dream — The central meeting pavilion, around which the Tribe’s new 36-unit housing development was designed. The new homes are arranged in a circular pattern around the pavilion, which is just one of the many features of the new development. Its name, “Chxi Musam Illihi,” means “A New Sleeping Place,” in Chinuk. Construction was completed 3 months ahead of schedule, which means that Tribal members could start moving into their new homes as soon as July 16.

houses are entirely handicapped equipped with handrails and lowered counters.

There are many bike and footpaths throughout, to better connect the residents with each other. In addition, there are several split cedar benches along the paths.

Also included nearby is a large community playground for people and their families to use and several wooded park-like areas with oak trees.

The homes were designed from the outset to be very energy efficient, with gas heating and double

New Housing Director Ready To Listen, Work

■ Carrina Kistler Ginter will focus on housing expansion, but she can probably change your oil too.

By Peta Tinda

Carrina Kistler Ginter is the new Tribal Housing Executive Director for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

Originally from Minnesota, she escaped the 30-below winters and moved to sunny California, where she worked for various non-profit and low-income housing organizations for 22 years. To relax, she raced a tuned-up 1970 Datsun 510, and was a 5-time regional autocross champion.

“It was my own wrench,” she said. “I did all the work on it. It had Weber carbs and 14-inch mag wheels. It was a blast.”

And she still hasn’t slowed down. Already her schedule is full of meetings, planning sessions and all of the organizing that goes into running a large department like the Housing Authority smoothly. Which is exactly what she does best.

“It’s constantly a different thing, every day,” Ginter said. “But it all leads to the needs of the Tribal Housing Authority, which is decided by

the needs of the Tribal members.”

She brings practical experience working with Tribal housing from her previous position as Housing Director for the Nooksack Tribe in Washington, where she worked for 5 years.

“It’s the same job, but on a bigger scale with more developed programs,” Ginter said.

She replaces former Executive Director Linda Layden, who she often networked with while on the board of the Northwest Indian Housing Association.

Her main goal as the new Executive Director,



Photo by Justin Phillips

she said, is to provide affordable housing and home-improvement options for Tribal members. She also said that her focus has always been on Tribal families with children and Tribal Elders.

“I need to do a lot of listening,” she said.

For the near future, Ginter said that she would like to see the Housing Authority work more closely with the Tribal Social Services Department.

“We’re putting a lot of planning into our Family Self Sufficiency Plan, which is a program designed by public housing to fulfill all the needs of the family, everything from the housing, to the child services, to the job creation aspect... and Social Services is a large piece of it.”

Ginter said she would like to expand and improve existing Tribal housing developments, seek additional sources of HUD funding for roads and infrastructure, and continue the development of additional housing for Tribal members.