

# House has been three years in coming

HOUSE continued  
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sit in piles on the counters, ready to be stowed away. One can almost smell it in the glass canisters just waiting for chocolate chip cookies. One can feel it on the play structure out back and from the porch that overlooks it.

The smell of hope is in the new chairs and sofas, new cabinets, the pillows and mattresses that are much thicker than they need to be.

One can almost taste it in the new pantries filled with food. One can feel it in the living room, see it along the kitchen table for 12 or so; imagine it in the two television rooms, one for children, one for moms; and on the double decker beds, looking through the bay window, taking off your shoes in the mud room with the long, low freezer in it.

One can imagine it in the support counselor's room fitted with a Murphy bed for nights the counselor has to stay over.

Nelson and Youth Mental Health/Alcohol and Drug Counselor Nicole Estrada, Mental Health Counselor Jan Kaschmitter, Alcohol and Drug Counselor Karan Scharf and Secretary Nadine Burt had six hours (two hours on each of three successive Wednesdays) to put the place together.

The house has been three years in coming. The effort included consulting with other programs, applying for and receiving grants for the building and operation of the facility, purchasing all the furnishings and "getting everybody on board and making sure we were doing everything correctly," said Nelson.

When the project started, 16 women in Grand Ronde and the

surrounding area needed a place to stay. Some were referred out to programs in Salem and McMinnville; some left the program and the area to find housing; and some were able to couch surf with the kindness of friends and relatives.

When women emerge from prison or residential drug and alcohol programs, as they continue to do almost without end, many from the Tribe or descendants of those from the Tribe and the larger Indian community will come here, some with children, to start over.

The program expects the women to become independent, said Nelson, and to learn skills that they never learned or learned and have forgotten. They need to re-learn the skills to be independent, and, in many cases, to be reunited with their children, to find their own housing and employment.

"When you are released," said Estrada, "you don't know what your next move is. I really hope this home will give them hope and something to strive for. Some people have never had a safe, beautiful home to live in, so they can't imagine the possibilities. I hope this gives them that as they take the next step in their lives."

For the first nine to 12 months, as many as five women but no children will inaugurate the place. Later, the rest of the rooms will open up, said Nelson, after staff becomes accustomed with operating the facility.

The program will be a wonder of decisions based on individual needs. On a case-by-case basis, women alone and with children will be selected to live in the home and be given a length of time that they will be expected to move on with skills needed for independent

living, Nelson said.

While there, women will pay rent of \$350 or 30 percent of their income, whichever is less.

Plans for the program continue to evolve.

"One idea," said Estrada, "was collaborating with the counselor, a position still unfilled, to start a parenting skills group at the new home." The idea comes from a facility in Portland, one of many places where the program is finding ideas.

"Whenever I go to a training," Estrada said, "I listen to the ideas and wonder, 'How could we use that here?'"

Construction costs totaling \$751,489 were all grant funded. Specifically, the project received an Indian Community Development block grant of \$500,000 for design and construction; Indian Housing block grant funding of \$167,000 for design and construction; Administration for Native Americans Social & Economic Strategies grant funding of more than \$100,000 for renovation, equipment and furnishings; and a U.S. Department of Justice grant for \$88,188 also for renovation, equipment and furnishings.

The Justice Department also just funded the program again for this fall, this time a three-year Indian Alcohol Substance Abuse grant supporting counselor staff time and some supplies and training for a combined total of \$234,550.

No financial investment was required by the Tribe.

Many Tribal, state and federal departments participated in the building and the ongoing needs of the program. They include Engineering and Public Works, Behavioral Health, Social Services, the Tribal Historic Preservation

Office, Telecommunications, Information Systems, Facilities and Procurement, said Tribal Engineer Jesse White, who was the project manager.

The project included a full renovation of an existing house to improve energy efficiency and to bring it into compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Construction included expansion of an existing 2,000-square-foot residence by 2,135 square feet, bringing the total facility square footage to 4,135, including sleeping areas, a laundry room and restroom facilities.

Wiring, plumbing, finishes and appliances were updated and new windows installed. The one-story addition blends in with the existing house in both materials and appearance. Utility improvements included the installation of a higher capacity water line, installation of a natural gas connection, increased electrical capacity and the decommissioning of an existing septic system.

Site work included creating a small paved parking area, an off-street turnaround, perimeter fencing, ramp access to the main floor, garden space, a small storage shed and trash enclosure, play equipment and drought-resistant landscaping.

The contractor was Native American-owned company Advanced Native Construction. The architect was Portland-based Sarah Cantine with Scott/Edwards Architecture.

With input from the Land and Culture Department, the house has been named *Chxi-san* (New Day), and during opening ceremonies from 1 to 3 Tuesday, April 1, department employees will be there to bless the new house. ■

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In 2012, the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board will launch a companion website: [www.wernative.org](http://www.wernative.org). The site is being designed for Native youth, to encourage healthy behaviors, share youth-friendly media and current events, increase cultural identity and pride, and share the positive impacts Native youth are having on their communities.

Funded by the National IHS HIV Program

For more information, please contact

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## Grand Ronde Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

The Grand Ronde Tribe is operating its own Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to assist Grand Ronde Tribal member households with energy payments (utility bills, firewood, etc.), energy emergencies and weatherization (e.g. furnace repairs).

Income eligible households within Polk, Yamhill, Marion, Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties with a Grand Ronde Tribal member are eligible to apply. CTGR members in these counties need to contact Grand Ronde to receive assistance instead of from the community action agency in their area. Grand Ronde's program enables more CTGR members to be served than would otherwise have been possible.

If you are interested in obtaining services contact Social Services at 1-800-242-8196 for energy assistance and the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority at 503-879-2405 for weatherization. The Tribe's LIHEAP program also serves all income eligible Indians on Grand Ronde Reservation or trust land.

