

Hope Meets Housing

Housing is a critical challenge for many Southwest tribes. Research shows that 52% of Navajo homes have incomplete plumbing (running water, toilets), and 85% cook on wood stoves (which leads to high rates of asthma). In addition, some 43% of Navajo live below poverty level. This includes some Navajo who work full-time. Throughout the rest of AZ, NM, and UT, however, only 9-18% of non-Natives live below poverty. In 2004, a former U.S. representative from Ohio said Navajo housing is “comparable to the Third World.” NRC’s Program Partners have said the same.

(Sources: NRC Native Stats, 2000 Census)

These stats and the large population of Navajo help explain why the waiting list for tribal housing can be 3 years or longer. They also explain why the home improvement done by National Relief Charities can make such a difference. In 2008, NRC made extensive repairs on Elders’ homes. For every home that NRC rebuilds or repairs, the tribe can mark one off of its list.



Raymond's House – Before NRC



Raymond's House – After NRC

Meet Raymond

When a Community Health Rep (CHR) went to check on Raymond, she found him up on the roof patching a hole. Raymond is 80. He lives alone and has always been industrious. For 50 years, Raymond worked for Sun Pacific and United Pacific Railroad. It was during those same years that he built his home – from scratch. His work on the home stopped when he ran out of money. Raymond now lives on a small social security income. The CHR told a Program Partner, who in turn told NRC. When we visited Raymond’s home with a building contractor, it was uninsulated and drafty. The dirt floor was cold, and the hole in the roof for the stovepipe let in the rain and snow. The bathroom was also in disrepair. Raymond has lived in this house for 29 years. NRC was able to help him finish what he started.

Meet Mavis



Mavis lives in a home that her deceased husband built 37 years ago. Like Raymond, he worked for the railroad and she lives on social security. Mavis is feeble and depends on a walker. The local senior center (a CIN Program Partner) delivers hot meals to her home. That was how they discovered her caved in roof and extensive damage to the bathroom, floor, and exterior of her home. Mavis hoped that in 5 to 6 years she could obtain a home lease and clear the waiting list for tribal housing. In the meantime, NRC was able to make Mavis’ home more livable now.