



Be smart, work safe: Check extension cords for cracking; be fire safe

Newsletter of the Interior Regional Housing Authority

Safe Housing for Tribes through the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act

Vol. V, Issue 2

Serving the Native People of the Doyon Region, Alaska

September 2008

CEO's Message

By **BEAR KETZLER**

Earlier this year, IRHA's Board of Commissioners reviewed the economic challenges facing the region and made the decision to change the leadership of the organization. I've accepted the commissioners' invitation to take IRHA to the next level.

While the economic factors facing our region are daunting, they are not overwhelming. The challenge of dealing with higher energy costs has redoubled IRHA's determination to maintain its leadership in Native housing. You can rely on me to carry out IRHA's mission while actively exploring ways to lower energy costs in the Doyon region.

While many of you know me personally, I'd like to share my background with readers with whom I'm not acquainted. I was born and raised locally; Nenana is my family's village. Following high school graduation I completed a stint in the Marine Corps. For the past 25 years, I've been involved, in one form or another, with economic development in the Interior of Alaska.

The focus of much of my efforts have been directed through positions at Tanana Chiefs Conference and in private sector investments. As TCC's director of agriculture and later as director of planning and development, I led efforts to promote local sustainability in food production and small business creation. In that regard, I wrote and analyzed grant applications, managed a revolving loan program, and developed new programs and services.

More recently, I worked as the tribal administrator for the Nenana Native Council, assuring the day-to-day management of program grants and tribal government operations.

I'm also working with the City of Tanana to develop a plan to convert a sizable portion of tribal/city utilities from fuel oil to wood-fired hot water and solar electricity.

My training and experience are well suited to the challenges that face IRHA. As an organi-



Bear Ketzler visits the Tanana washeteria, the village facility for washing clothes, taking showers and collecting fresh water. Under Ketzler's guidance, the city and tribal governments augment fuel oil costs with increased conservation and energy derived from solar collectors and wood gasification boilers.

zation that is funded by the federal government, state agencies and private grants, I am eager manage these funds to better provide our clients with housing that meets their needs.

Since coming on board I've traveled, with staff and a commissioner, to Anchorage to meet with HUD and other agency representatives. Much of our discussions centered on bringing greater weatherization and alternative energy projects to rural Alaska. I'm very positive that IRHA is going to be in the forefront of developments that will provide our region with lower energy costs and greater self-sufficiency.

The state's weatherization program is creating training opportunities across the region. The state requires each applicant's home be assessed by certified personnel. Several of our staff are currently in assessor training and I in-

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IRHA Board of Commissioners

Patrick McCarty, Chair
Ruby, Tel: 907-468-4407

Daisy Northway, Vice-chair
Northway, Tel: 907-778-2311

Teisha Simmons, Sec/Treasurer
Fairbanks, Tel: 907-479-5144

Henry Deacon
Grayling, Tel: 907-453-5128

Fred Alexie, Sr.
Kaltag, Tel: 907-534-2271

Christine Cooper joins IRHA team at front desk

In late June, Christine Cooper joined Interior Regional Housing Authority on as our front desk greeter and receptionist.

Christine has a work history that is dedicated to the Native community in Fairbanks. Her record of employment includes Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks Native Association, Alaska Native Women's Coalition, and Doyon, Limited.



"We're lucky to have a person with such diverse experience as Christine working with IRHA", said Bear Ketzler.

Christine's family is originally from Galena and Ruby, however, she grew up in Galena and in North Pole. Her parents are Jean Keogh of Galena and Claude Cooper of Anchorage. Christine has three children, Felisha, 19, Marina, 17, and Christopher, 12.

She enjoys collecting family pictures, beadwork, family activities, and traveling. Christine used IRHA's services to purchase a home through the mutual-help program.

State of Alaska Weatherization Program

IRHA is accepting applications to weatherize homes in Hughes and Huslia

Contact your tribal office for details and applications

Applications must be submitted to IRHA no later than October 3, 2008

Send to:

**Interior Regional Housing Authority
828 27th Ave,
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701**

or

**Fax:
452-8324**

*If you have questions, please contact Tiffany toll-free
Ph: 1-800-478-4742 x162*

Burn Out in Grayling, August 31

A kitchen fire went out of control and took everything

Donations to the family are greatly appreciated

Clothing items needed:

Women's: size 12

Young ladies: size 1

Men's: Pants 38W/32L, T-shirt: XL

Household items:

**Blankets, sheets, towels, dishes, pot and pans, etc.
Any and all. House total loss.**

**For details on this request as well as
furniture and money donations:**

Please contact Brain Leal at IRHA, Ph: 452-8315 x163.

Thank you!

IRHA

The Interior Regional Housing Authority is the Tribally Designated Housing Entity of the tribes of the Doyon region. It works in partnership with the tribes that have, by certification and resolution, agreed to be part of the Indian Housing Plan. It is legally constituted under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 to promote safe housing and self-sufficiency.

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| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Bear Ketzler | Chief Executive Officer |
| Eli James | Chief Financial Officer |
| A.J. Felix | Acting Construction Manager |
| Joy Shockley | Community Planning Manager |
| Kimberly Carlo | Energy & Weatherization Admin. |
| Annie Silas | Planning and Admin. Assistant |
| Tiffany Simmons | Housing & Properties Manager |

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tend to recruit at least a dozen more from the region in the near future.

I'm working with the Alaska Energy Authority's (AEA) biomass committee. In this capacity, I'll be able to coordinate information between IRHA and this state agency. The AEA's primary interest is in reducing fossil fuel dependence in rural areas.

A growing list of villages are actively considering biomass projects to offset fuel oil expenses. AEA and IRHA are working with them to assure it's done right. The new technology we're investigating accepts multi-fuels (waste oil, coal, propane, pellets and wood).

It's my intention to lead IRHA in a fair and equitable manner. I believe in transparency; my decisions and policies will be open and above board. I'll work to gain your confidence and assure that all villages have an equal opportunity to take advantage of the services we offer. I do not play favorites. I maintain an open-door policy; I'm always available to hear people's ideas and complaints about the level of our service.

Under my leadership, IRHA will elevate energy generation and conservation to primary importance. As Athabascans of Interior Alaska move forward, we are going to accomplish more by working smarter. IRHA intends to count BTUs like a dieter counts calories.

In this newsletter and in succeeding issues you'll learn how we plan to highlight energy generation and conservation while improving building construction to offset some of the economic pain of high fuel costs.

As we move through this period of uncertainty, I welcome your comments and suggestions. Good ideas come from working and talking together. Don't hesitate to speak out; everyone has a part to play. I look forward to hearing from you.

Weatherization moves into mainstream awareness

In its last session, the Alaska Legislature funded the weatherization program to the tune of \$300 million. This is a huge amount of money; one that is several times larger than the state has spent on this item over the last 30 years combined. It is \$75 million more than the federal government spent last year on weatherization for the whole country.

And while approximately two-thirds of the money will go to low and moderate-income homes, it is still not enough to meet Alaska's needs. According to AHFC, it will take about \$3.2 billion to cover weatherization and rebates across Alaska. It's obvious that the legislature's initial funding will not address the vast major-

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Galena Assisted-Living Center takes shape, facility means elders can stay near home and family



Photo credit: Shirley Cleaver

IRHA's main project this summer has been the Galena Assisted-Living Center in Galena. This is the largest project we taken on and it has presented special challenges. It will be 8,871 sq. ft. in size and consists of nine apartments plus a manager's residence. The project budget is \$5.6 million. The roof will soon be completed, allowing builders to work inside as the weather turns colder.

Wood gasification: forward into the past
What is old is new energy in Tanana

Biomass, or wood gasification is not a new process. It pre-dated oil but was replaced because oil's more convenient. Now that its cost has increased so much oil is losing favor as an energy source. With a ready source of wood nearby, wood gasification is an obvious energy alternative for space and water heating.

Tanana, Alaska is testing the concept by hooking two GARN wood boilers to its municipal heating system. Located in a small building adjacent to Tanana's washeteria, each unit holds 1,850 gallons of water. In operation now, the boilers are supplying hot water for showers and washing machines. While the load is not extreme by modern standards, in Tanana, as in other rural Alaska communities, every gallon of fuel not burned is a gallon saved.

With rural communities spending 40 percent of their annual income on energy this winter compared with 4 percent for the average urban household, it's easy to see the sense of looking at wood again. When fuel oil costs \$5.50 per gallon, people get creative.

While analyzing Tanana's energy use, Bear Ketzler looked at the numbers and realized the potential to save the village money. Ketzler learned that the Minnesota-made GARN units burn at 84 percent average efficiency when the wood has 20 percent humidity. They are rated for safety by a major product testing laboratory and are shielded to prevent hot temperatures near workers.

The company boasts that its units have been in operation for more than 20 years.

As a result of patented design, the ceramic burn box consumes particulates, smoke and creosote at 2,000 degrees before moving hot gas through a heat exchanger within the water jacket. Most of the heat is transferred to the water, producing a "cool" exhaust that is approximately 150-350 degrees above water temperature. The units burn so completely that their final exhaust produces virtually no smoke and exits the building with little notice.

Cynthia Erickson, a Tanana homeowner and business woman, is pleased with the development and excited that Tanana is leading the way. "Alternative energy needs to be on everyone's mind; every village should be concerned with cutting costs," she said.

Ketzler says the GARNs are expected to offset enough energy costs to save up to 9,000

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Tanana's biomass project goes online; making energy cheaper than oil



Tanana's wood gasification boilers are producing energy at a cost far less than the price of diesel fuel. Installed over the last six months, the units were fired recently with local spruce for the first time. The project represents the leading edge of alternative energy development in rural Alaska. While a handful of similar projects are running in other areas of the state, Tanana is the first village in the Interior to make the jump to biomass. According to Bear Ketzler, pictured here, the units burned a cord a month between May-September.

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ity of Alaska homes.

In an effort to be as fair as possible, funding is allocated regionally and sub-regionally. No one region will be treated disproportionately, although a lack of energy assessors in rural areas may produce a bottleneck of homeowner applications.

For many people, an even greater bottleneck is likely to occur when homeowners with a rating attempt to find a contractor to carry out the assessor's recommendations. Energy retrofits are often complicated and require a level of training that is not fully appreciated. Training programs are in the works, but these will require time to ramp up.

IRHA is ahead of the curve in this regard. We've been doing retrofits for years and have on-the-ground experience with village housing. Nevertheless, the task is enormous. While the process is underway, hiring, training and scheduling energy assessors will take time. Please be patient.

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gallons of fuel oil per year. And more of that savings will stay in the village as payments to people who harvest wood and deliver it to the power plant. Officials intend to pay wood haulers \$250/cord. At current fuel oil costs, when wood is translated into BTUs it's providing energy at a rate of \$2 per gallon of diesel.

With thousands of acres of forest available, and all the drift wood that comes down the Tanana and Yukon rivers, the village is well placed to take advantage of biomass energy.

Tanana's former mayor, Patrick Moore, headed up the team that installed the GARNs. As the project superintendent he says the units were uncomplicated to set up.

"The biggest challenge was logistics. There was a 12-week delay in getting a replacement heat exchanger. And next time I'd anchor them to the pad and then put up the building, rather than try to fit them in an existing building."

The units weigh 4,500 pounds each, making the job of final placement a tricky task. They are about six feet high and wide and 10 feet long. Since the units are unpressurized and not true boilers, the only permit needed is from the state fire marshal's office.

Ketzler says the project's final cost will come in at \$160,000 and that it's funded with a CDBG federal grant. An additional \$45,000 covered a bank of solar electric collectors on the roof of the washeteria. They provide 5,500 watts of power.

Charlie Wright, who works for Toogha', the local non-profit water service, runs the GARNs as part of his responsibilities. "I'm impressed", he says. "They're easier to operate than I thought they'd be. They're getting lots of attention, too. We've had all kinds of people stopping in for tours, locals, leaders from other villages, people drifting the river. Everyone wants to see how they work."