

Rural Housing Service • Housing Preservation Grant Program

Repairs Improve the Safety of Tribal Elders' Homes

Every time the south winds blew through the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), Mary and Abbie Van Pelt had problems with their roof. Each time, Abbie would climb on the roof to try and fix the issue.

When CTUIR received a [Housing Preservation Grant](#) from USDA Rural Development, the tribe's Housing Department began offering up to \$6,000 per household to help tribal elders address health and safety hazards in their homes. The Van Pelts heard about the grants and decided to apply. Pamela Ranslam with the CTUIR Housing Department helped them fill out the paperwork.

"I was surprised they approved us so soon," said Abbie.

Tanner Michael from the CTUIR Housing Department then helped them determine how best to use their grant, collected quotes, and hired the contractor.

"Normally, the homeowner would get the money, and then they'd have to hire the contractor," said Ranslam. "We're doing that for them, and I think that has been successful." Abbie agrees. He's grateful for that service.

The shingles on the Van Pelts' roof have now been replaced. Their home's septic system was repaired as well, and they had just enough funding left to replace failing light fixtures and the smoke alarms in their home.

"The roof looks good," said Mary. "Now I don't have to send Abbie up there anymore."

The Van Pelts aren't alone. In all, 29 families on the reservation are making critical repairs to their homes with the help of this and one previous USDA grant. Eliminating these safety issues is enabling tribal elders to age in place, remaining in the homes they have known for many years.



Tribal elders Mary and Abbie Van Pelt were able to have their roof re-paired with help from a USDA grant. Photo courtesy of Casey Brown, Reporter, Confederated Umatilla Journal.

Obligation Amount: \$50,000 grant (2017); \$50,000 grant (2015)

Date of Obligation: September 2017; September 2015

Congressional District: Representative Walden, District 2; Senators Wyden and Merkley

Demographics: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; population 2,916

Impact: On the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, 29 tribal elders are marking critical health and safety repairs to their homes.