

INTERTRIBAL COUNCIL ON UTILITY POLICY

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Intertribal COUP Straw Bale *SAFE Homes* Initiative *Sustainable, Affordable and Efficient Homes*

Intertribal COUP envisions a future that puts Tribes on the leading edge of true sustainability, a future in which Tribes can depend on their own natural resources and their own trained workforce to address the critical triple bottom line for Sustainable, Affordable and Efficient Homes.

Along with tribal wind energy development, the Intertribal COUP Sustainability Center/ SAFE Homes Initiative moves into the frontier of sustainable and appropriate technologies for reservation employment in construction of affordable, energy efficient and healthy tribal homes. The SAFE Homes' "Train the Trainers" program brings together local building trade faculty and students with international expert advisors to combine local talent with leading-edge knowledge and best practices in straw bale construction and other truly sustainable technologies, and will serve as the basis for broader community planning for sustainability and regeneration. The initiative has direct application to critical tribal housing needs and employment opportunities for young and growing tribal populations in Northern Great Plains and throughout Indian Country, and for the relocation of nearly 200 Alaska villages due to global climate change.

Native building philosophies, designs, materials and techniques have a 40,000 year "green" history in North America. Over the past two centuries, reservation housing has largely been diverted into more conventional but inefficient structures predicated on cheap energy. In the northern Great Plains and elsewhere, federal housing programs were introduced as part of both "disaster relief" and assimilation policies. With the need today for over 200,000 homes, unemployment rates over 65%, an extremely young and rapidly growing population (median age of 18), and accelerating energy costs, a tribal community-based building training program for healthier, affordable and energy efficient homes from local materials can provide a critical solution for sustainability.

Intertribal COUP's leadership recognizes the opportunity for reprogramming existing reservation revenue streams for tribal housing (\$630 to \$650 M/yr) to promote better quality homes, skilled local jobs and long term carbon reductions with energy savings and reduced utility bills for the poorest U.S. communities. The integrated design and construction of COUP Sustainability Centers, homes and straw bale trailer wraps forms the basis for the Train-the-Trainers program in collaboration with Sinte Gleska University, AIHEC and other tribal college vocational technology programs. Funding of this SAFE Homes initiative will prime the pump with effective demonstration projects of quality construction founded in appropriate technology and passive survivability.



See: http://www.eesi.org/062008_Straw-Bale_Construction