

The Tiny Home Village: Family Connection and Stability

The YMCA of Seven Council Fires has asked the YMCA Alumni National Service Project to build a Tiny Home Village to meet a critical need on the Cheyenne River Reservation."

Community needs will be met by the Tiny Homes Village

There is a desperate shortage of housing on the reservation leading to unhealthy situations for children and families. There is a 3-5 year wait for subsidized housing and it is very typical for homes to be occupied by 10-15 people from related families.

Selecting the residents of the tiny homes

The YMCA's Board of Directors decided to give priority to Native American single mothers. Selection will be handled through an application process that aligns with the best practices promoted by the YMCA Housing Network, of which the YMCA of the Seven Council Fires is a member.

A high occupancy rate is assured

The Y does not anticipate having a problem maintaining full occupancy of the tiny homes because the need is so great. A waiting list of families ready to move in will likely start as soon as a home becomes vacant.

Management of the housing program

The Y currently has a staff member responsible for programs and services related to Family Connection and Stability. This person will work with residents of the tiny homes to connect them with resources and help them create their path toward permanent housing.

Maintenance and care of the homes

Residents will receive an orientation that explains their responsibility for upkeep of the home and trains them in those tasks. Staff will conduct monthly "walk-throughs" of the homes to make sure they are being kept up, and Y maintenance staff will handle all repairs. The rent paid by residents will fund this work.

Twigs: Bringing YMCA programming to rural communities

Community needs will be met by adding twigs throughout the reservation

The name "Twigs" comes from the representation that these are not small Y "branches," but, instead, meaningful and intentional ways for the YMCA to anchor its programming and presence into rural communities throughout the Reservation.

Twigs will allow Y volunteers and staff to be able to offer more in-depth programming by having everything needed for summer or after-school programming already present within that specific community. The Twigs program is extremely customizable. The Y will collaborate with each community where a Twig is present and, through town hall meetings and surveys, provide the things that best serve that specific community. The YMCA will also create advisory boards for each Twig, made up of members from that community.

Created from recycled shipping containers

The Twigs will be created from recycled shipping containers. The initial two Twigs will be built by YMCA Alumni volunteers in Dupree and re-located to Cherry Creek and Bear Grass on the Reservation. These containers will be outfitted with a wide variety of programming materials and tools to help make mobile programming much more accessible and enriching. Plans are to potentially include community garden spaces, washing stations for meals, rotating programming tools, and/or sports equipment.

Families will be empowered to shape the nature of the programs offered for their children. The Y will present a menu of program options and ask families to tell them which programs they most want to see offered. While most of the programming is for kids, there are also occasional family events offered such as holiday meals or Family Fun Nights where the Y can offer an array of activities with community partners such as, Behavioral Health, Indian Health Services, and other organizations.

Other programming will include activities such as STEM projects, cooking classes, gardening, sports, arts projects, depending on the interests expressed by families in that particular community. When determining where to place the Twigs, the Board of Directors considers factors such as proximity to the Y, services currently available, population size, and connection to the Y among other things.

Staffing the Twigs and operating hours

The Y staff currently running programs in reservation communities will staff the Twigs which will operate 3 hours/day after-school and longer during the summer months. The Y is designing and launching a parallel initiative to work with interested leaders from across the U.S. to offer training in intercultural competency and diversity. Members of this new initiative will help upkeep and conduct programming at a Twig over the summer.

Sustainability of the tiny homes and twigs

The YMCA has seen continued growth of its annual campaign. Further, the Y has secured a 3-year \$150,000 grant to fund programming. The endowment portion of the campaign will be earmarked for staffing.