

ABC 30

Officials celebrate affordable housing project for Tule River Indian Tribe in Porterville

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By: Brian Johnson

PORTERVILLE, Calif. (KFSN) -- Dozens of Tule River Indian Tribe members have a new place to call home, thanks to a new affordable housing project by the Tule River Indian Housing Authority and Visalia-based non-profit Self-Help Enterprises, along with other partners.

Nupchi Xo' Oy is located on Mulberry Avenue in the city of Porterville, just east of Highway 65.

"It's a blessing to have a home and a safe place for your family," Tule River Indian Housing Authority Chair Christina Dabney-Keel said.

The complex consists of 40 units, 25 townhomes and 15 single-family homes, along with a community building and playground.

Tule River tribal member Raymond Alfaro says moving into a three-bedroom house here has been a life-changing experience.

"We were living in a one-bedroom house and it was hard," Alfaro said. "Now, I finally get to raise my kids in a normal house setting."

Alfaro has never lived on the reservation, but he hopes to once more housing is available.

According to a December document from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the tribe estimates they'll need 500 new housing units over the next 20 years.

The relocation of the tribe's casino to Porterville is expected to help clear the way for new construction on the reservation.

Housing Authority Chair Christina Dabney-Keel says federal COVID relief funds have been committed to another affordable housing project on the reservation, expected to open in the fall of 2022.

But for now, they're thankful for Nupchi Xo' Oy, a first-of-its-kind housing project for the South Valley.

"The partnership is new," Dabney-Keel said. "I know it's new for Self-Help and it's new for the housing authority and the tribe. We're just looking forward to furthering housing for our tribal members."