ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Addressing the Jicarilla Apache Housing Crisis: Options for Sustainable Community Development
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ABSTRACT: The town of Dulce is small community located in Northern New Mexico on the Jicarilla Apache reservation. Although the tribal community is considered reasonably economically developed, there are serious problems within the community that have and continue to negatively affect the quality of life for residents. Although the issues are many, and undoubtedly complex and intertwined, one of the most felt is the severe lack of housing options available to community members and the poor quality of the options that are available. In an attempt to address this problem, the Tribal government has hired a Phoenix-based corporation to build a new housing project from prefabricated components. The design and structure of the new buildings is much like the existing housing developments that have been subsidized by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Although this project helps address the need for more housing options to accommodate the growing population, the execution has not been ideal. The waitlist to be considered for the new housing stretches into the hundreds, and various structural problems have proved to be a problematic from a health and safety perspective. This has resulted in poor quality housing for the growing population that has been fashioned in the same stick-built or "mainstream American" model imposed by the oppressive system during the assimilation period. There is no guarantee that this new development will provide a lasting solution to the quality aspect of the housing crisis because the value systems that promote home maintenance are not transferred along with the structures. This research considers alternative approaches to addressing the housing problem. These can include local building materials, sustainable building practices (such as the strawbale, cordwood, cob, and the earthship model), and utilizing local skilled labor (as a way to provide much needed employment). Evaluating options such as these will help to generate alternative solutions that take into account the local climate and geography and help create a meaningful relationship between the community and their living spaces that relates to traditional housing practices. Creating this connection will hopefully establish a renewed sense of pride in the community and serve as an initiating point for further sustainable community development, which may eventually include alternative energy and local food projects in hope of building a more resilient and less dependent community.