

NEZ PERCE TRIBE

Project focuses on upgrading wood stoves

Reservation homes will be tested for particulate matter

By BRAD W. GARY
OF THE TRIBUNE

An area air quality study could lead to new wood stoves for a few families on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation.

The new stoves are part of a soon-to-begin Nez Perce Tribal study to measure exactly what impact older wood stoves have on their users.

It's a pilot project, with eight homes in Kamiah and eight in Lapwai, which will all have older wood stoves replaced with new ones to measure levels of particulate matter inside the homes.

Rochelle Troyano, a science instructor at Northwest Indian College's branch campus on The Nez Perce Indian Reservation is organizing the study sampling with the help of some of her students.

Troyano said the data will be shared with researchers at the University of Montana, who will later also use it in teaching high school students.

"The idea is to bring the awareness of air quality down to the community," Troyano said. "What better way to include high school and middle school students."

The tribe is partnering with the University of Montana and the Environmental Protection Agency on the study.

The purpose of the study is to measure

the change in air quality before and after the residential wood stove replacements, Troyano said, and to educate the tribe on health effects of burning with the different wood stoves.

The Nez Perce Tribe is looking for homes in Lapwai and Kamiah who have children between the ages of 6 and 17 with asthma or other respiratory problems to participate in the study.

Student researchers will take their sampling equipment into the homes next week, and measure particulate matter levels in and out of the homes for the remainder of the wood-burning season. Those students will then go back and retest the homes after the EPA-certified wood stoves are installed over the summer.

"At that point we would expect to see much less of the particulate matter and air toxins," Troyano said, noting however, that science demands the researchers show results from their study.

The study is being funded through a \$105,000 grant from the EPA, with additional funding from other sources.

According to a tribal news release about the study, the new wood stoves are designed to emit cleaner particulate matter as a means to reduce indoor air pollution and address respiratory ailments in children.

Troyano called the study a "feel good project" which she said will also give her students a chance to gain valuable internship experience while conducting the studies.

The pilot study is a small one, but Troyano said the EPA is willing to fund additional studies if the project yields successful results.

Troyano noted that EPA is funding similar studies throughout the United States.

Gabriel Bohnee, the tribe's Environmental Restoration and Waste Management director, said it is important to find ways to improve the health of people with asthma, and look at the benefits of more efficient wood stoves.

The study is being done through the division along with the tribe's education department.

Julie Simpson, air quality project coordinator for the division, noted many homes are heating primarily with wood stoves. She said very little research has been done on the issue.

"I think it's a fantastic opportunity," Simpson said.

Those interested in participating in the study can call Troyano at (208) 935-4106.

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