



**k<sup>h</sup>wat yaka haws, “Auntie’s Place”**  
**Family housing in Clackamas County**

k<sup>h</sup>wat yaka haws, meaning “Auntie’s Place” in the Chinook language, is a vital resource designed to support Native families experiencing houselessness. A significant milestone in NAYA’s ongoing mission to provide culturally specific, comprehensive services to the Native community, the shelter adds a much-needed component to NAYA’s continuum of housing services, providing an entry point for Native families to access stable housing.





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### **Family housing in Clackamas County**

To commemorate the signing of the shelter lease, NAYA staff, Native community members, artists, and friends gathered to offer songs, prayers, and share a meal. Attendees were asked for suggestions for naming the shelter. Thinking about Native families facing housing challenges, and the way community Aunties open up their homes to help, NAYA Director of Family Services Tawna Sanchez came up with “Auntie’s Place.” Referring to the shelter as “Auntie’s Place” helps preserve the dignity of people who will be staying here and embodies many of NAYA’s core values, including kindness, respect, giving, tradition, community, and pride. NAYA elder Suzie Kuerschner introduced us to Valeria Atanacio, who generously provided the Chinook words for Auntie’s Place, k<sup>h</sup>wat yaka haws.

The shelter includes eight private family rooms, each with the capacity for up to seven household members. Each room has a mini kitchen as well as a private bath, and one room is ADA accessible. Common spaces, a community kitchen, and laundry facilities are also part of shelter amenities.

NAYA aims to reduce homelessness in our community by addressing both immediate and long-term needs. The shelter will provide a range of services, including access to traditional healing practices, educational and employment support, and assistance with navigating housing and social services including funding for longer term housing and supportive services.

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## FAQs

### **How many units are there and what is included?**

Auntie's Place features eight units, each with a full bathroom, kitchenette (including a full-size refrigerator, two burners, microwave, and kitchen supplies), and a lockable door for privacy. Each unit can accommodate five to seven people. Common spaces, a community kitchen, and laundry facilities are also part of shelter amenities.

### **Who are these units for?**

Auntie's Place will serve Native families of with at least one member under the age of 18.

### **Why is this shelter needed for the Native community?**

Data from Clackamas County shows that Native people have the highest disparity in rates of homelessness as compared to any other race or ethnicity.

### **What types of services will be provided?**

Auntie's Place will offer a welcoming environment, providing a culturally centered, safe place for families to regain self sovereignty. Residents can access housing navigation, placement, and retention services, and peer support for mental health and addiction recovery. Additional services include access to traditional healing practices, educational and employment support, assistance with navigating housing and social services, and funding for longer term housing and supportive services.

### **Will pets be allowed?**

Per our lease agreement, pets are not allowed.

### **How will families be referred to Auntie's Place?**

Referrals to Auntie's Place can be made through NAYA or the Clackamas County Coordinated Housing Access line.

### **Are there ADA units?**

The ground floor includes an ADA unit with a washer and dryer.

### **What transit options are nearby?**

Residents can walk three minutes to the nearest bus stop or 11 minutes to the Milwaukie Transit Center, both providing TriMet access to the Portland Metro area.

### **How long will families be able to stay?**

On the average, stays are expected to last 45 days (about 1 and a half months), though Auntie's Place will provide flexibility for those needing more or less time.

**How is Auntie's Place funded?** Auntie's Place is made possible with funding from Clackamas County through the Metro Housing Supportive Services Measure, as well as the Day One Families Fund.

## THE MURALS

### ARTIST STATEMENTS



#### **Amaranta Colindres**

I'm a guest to the PNW, originating from Custcatlán, now known as the country of El Salvador. My heritage is Nahuatl Pipil Mayan, but I'm also mixed with Caribbean (Yoruba Nigerian and Tahino Tribes) and European (Spanish, German-Jewish and Hungarian).

I feel a personal connection to the mission of the space. When I was 4 years old, my mother ran away from an abusive situation with my siblings and I. I have empathy for the families at the center who are in a similar situation seeking safety and resources for housing while recreating their lives and finding stability.

I was raised in California and played with my siblings on the shores of the Sacramento River, while my father fished on the weekends. As an adult I enjoy hiking and find nature to be my catalyst for healing my physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

My specialty is painting animals and nature scenes with elements of spirituality. I use bold colors with strong contrast in a harmonious way that feels exciting, happy and safe. My mural is a visual land acknowledgement emphasizing local plants and animals, showing a diverse amount of wildlife thriving in their respective homes. A mother bear will be the focal point, hunting with her shy cubs peeking from the safety of native plant foliage behind her. The families might relate to that.



**Arusha Dittmer (Ho-Chunk Nation)**

My personal experiences with housing instability, coupled with the scarcity of resources, have shaped my perspective. When I learned that this space would cater to individuals grappling with similar challenges, I was inspired to contribute. Through my artwork, I aim to provide support and positivity, fostering healing among our indigenous people.

Having grown up and participated in ceremonies with many community members, I am thrilled to be part of this project. My design is inspired by the space. First foods are important in preservation of culture and dignity. I wanted to create a design that spoke to community and tradition, representing the brightness and resiliency of our people. This would allow for residents to correlate the design and space to their own tribal histories but also enjoy the mural as a backdrop for a community space.

With a focus on first foods and the connection that indigenous people have to them, the design pays homage to the local tribes and serves as a reminder that they are still here, while mixing first foods from other regions to show a connective presence of community across tribes. The color palette was chosen to stand out from the muted palette of the kitchen and to emphasize the space for community building through the sharing of food.



### **Chanti Mañon (Osage and Mazahua)**

I believe that art can be a powerful tool to tell stories, transform a space, and reflect community hopes and values. This project is particularly important to me because homelessness and housing insecurity is a prominent issue faced by Indigenous people today as a direct product of colonialism. As an Indigenous artist, I think that it's my responsibility to use my skills and experience to reflect and uplift Indigenous communities. My artistic style tends to be bold, with vibrant colors, and I express various aspects of Indigenous experience through my work.

I grew up with deep connections to the Portland Native community through my family, ceremonial community, and through opportunities to work with various Portland based organizations through my art.

The kitchen mural highlights local first foods, and other vital first foods across Turtle Island. This ties into themes of the importance of nature, and Indigenous history/culture.

For the lounge, the mural includes an elder braiding a youth's hair, and another figure smudging, highlighting a sense of connection and community. Intertwined with these two images is imagery of the river and canoeing, plants and animals, incorporating themes of inclusivity, Indigenous history and culture, the importance of nature, and art as healing.



## Leo White Horse (Rosebud Sioux Tribe)

I have been a graphic artist and fine artist for over 30 years. For most of those years I worked in the advertising and sign industry, designing and painting billboards and hand lettering 24'x48' areas, sometimes bigger.

I am a member of NAACM (Native American Arts and Crafts Market) in Eugene OR. Our goal is to create better communication between the different native groups in the local schools and university councils, creating opportunities for native artists and crafts people to show and sell their creations.

My artwork for this mural comes from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. It is what I know and grew up with. I am using Ledger style artwork, translating the idea of family, community, security, and heritage.

## THE MURAL PROCESS

An important goal for our family shelter was to create a welcoming environment for Native families. Muralists were sought to celebrate Native culture in a space where families are rebuilding their lives. NAYA engaged with art organizations, artists, and Native community members to arrive at these common themes:

**Uplifting Activism:** NAYA received permission from Derrick Belgarde of the Chief Seattle Club, who came up with the statement, "Never Homeless Before 1492," to be included as part of the art in the shelter.

**The Importance of Nature:** Connection and Relationship to Land and Plants.

**Creating a Sense of Pride, Belonging and Representation**

**Inclusivity and Being Inclusive:** Representative of Many Tribes, Local and non-Local, Celebrate the Diversity of our Culture(s)

**Educational Opportunity by Sharing Indigenous History and/or Culture:**  
Tell the History of Those Who Were Here Before Us

We thank our artists, Amaranta Colindres, Arusha Dittmer, Chanti Mañon, and Leo White Horse, for creating a culturally rich and welcoming home for our families.



Detail, Arusha Dittmer

## ABOUT NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTER

NAYA provides culturally specific programs and services that guide our people in the direction of self-determination and balance through cultural empowerment. Our mission is to enhance the diverse strengths of our youth and families in partnership with the community through cultural identity and education.



2024 is NAYA's 50th Anniversary! NAYA has been supporting the Portland region's Native community since 1974. From innovative programs to impactful advocacy, we've been resolute in our mission to uplift our youth and families.

Thank you for joining us in the Opening Celebration of "Auntie's Place," a critical milestone in our 50-year journey.



**Gifting is part of our culture.** We invite you to join us in supporting our families, who will need basic supplies to start their housing experience in a good way. For those who are interested in helping, we've created an Amazon wish list. This list will remain open and be updated periodically to reflect current needs. Scan the QR code to access the list.

**YOUTH CENTERED • FAMILY DRIVEN • ELDER GUIDED**

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