



# Tiny Home Living

*Dear Dr. Per Cap:*

*I'm single and think a tiny home might be a good housing option on the rez. What are your thoughts?*

*Signed,*

*Tiny Dreamer*

Dear Tiny Dreamer

It depends on your definition of a “good housing option”. If you’re looking for a house to significantly appreciate or increase in value over time, you might be disappointed. But if you want a home that provides safe shelter, comfort, and an eco-friendly footprint without going into debt for thirty years a tiny home might be a great option.

The tiny home and micro-living movement has really taken off and Indian Country is onboard. Some Native folks, especially millennials, are turned off by the hassle of maintaining larger homes and seek a simpler back to basics lifestyle. Others are attracted to the low cost of ownership. Considering it’s really hard to purchase a new home for less than \$100,000 in some Native communities. Folks living off-grid without access to public utilities might also embrace the self-sufficiency of micro-living.

I recently spoke to Shawna Begay, a young woman who plans to build a tiny home near Crownpoint, New Mexico. She comes from a large Navajo family with a handy supply of trade skilled relatives – electricians, plumbers, welders, etc. They’ll help her save on construction costs while she plans for sustainability. One cool feature is a small solar panel to power her basic electrical needs like lighting and a charging station for wireless devices.

Shawna’s crunched numbers for a twenty foot by twenty foot floorplan which is about the maximum size to still qualify as a tiny home. Her two-bedroom site built house will cost about \$6,000. Heck, that’s less than a person might pay for a good used car.

Tribes are getting in on the action too. Ho-Chunk, Inc., an economic development corporation owned by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska recently entered the tiny home market through its subsidiary, Dynamic Homes. They built a bunch of tiny homes that served as quarantine housing for tribal members during the pandemic and currently offer a couple of tiny home models that are customizable.

It's important to remember that there are pros and cons to a tiny house. For example they are not always subject to the same regulations as larger homes, which can pose challenges when trying to finance and insure them. You'll also want to check with your tribe regarding possible restrictions or special policies that might apply to a tiny home. Moreover, if you have kids or house pets there's always the risk of outgrowing your space.

Lastly, you'll want to be careful not to get carried away with your budget. On average a well-built tiny home will cost about \$60,000 depending on location, construction type, and design features. Any more than that and you might end up paying the same amount as you would for a regular house. Less is more!

***Ask Dr. Per Cap*** is a program funded by First Nations Development Institute with assistance from the FINRA Investor Education Foundation. For more information, visit [www.firstnations.org](http://www.firstnations.org). To send a question to Dr. Per Cap, email [askdrpercap@firstnations.org](mailto:askdrpercap@firstnations.org).