**Roedel Navajo FEATURE - Part 2**

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**INTRO:** Wednesday 12/18, we highlighted the challenge of living without electricity. Today, you’ll hear from Navajo families who are getting power for the first time. The Mountain West News Bureau’s Kaleb Roedel [RAY-dull] has more on a life-changing program.

**SCRIPT:**

It’s the late morning and already nearing 90 degrees in the Navajo Nation … where many homes still don’t have electricity.

And that makes life hard.

**BLACKWATER: “We make a lot of grocery trips every day for, like, meat, frozen meat. And it’s really expensive like that.”**

That’s Persephonie Blackwater. She lives in this windswept desert about 20 miles outside of the small town of Kayenta. A place where towering red mesas outnumber homes.

Like many here on the reservation, Blackwater relies on a generator.

But she won’t have to buy another one this year.

<<<fade in ambi of drilling being done>>>

That’s because a few hundred yards away, workers are using a crane-like truck with an attachment called an auger. It looks like a giant corkscrew drilling into the earth. <<<fade up ambi>>

A tall wooden power pole will be planted here to connect Blackwater to the grid.

Blackwater is getting electricity thanks to “Light Up Navajo” – a program started 5 years ago.

But progress has been slow. Development on remote desert land is expensive – and difficult work.

Over the last five years, the program has powered nearly 850 households. And there’s still more than 13,000 that need power.

Just down the road on the outskirts of Kayenta, Ryan Begay is starting to feel the benefits of having electricity … especially for his seven kids.

**BEGAY: “They were excited even for like having popsicles in a freezer.”**

Helen Nelson is an elderwho lived most of her life without electricity.

But this summer, Nelson got power. She shares her story in the Navajo language.

***NELSON: “NAVAJO LANGUAGE”***

Nelson says her life is a lot different now. Her son bought her a refrigerator. And at night, she can turn on a light if she has to use the bathroom.

***NELSON: “NAVAJO LANGUAGE”***

Nelson says she was also excited to watch TV in her home for the first time. She stayed up past midnight – laughing and feeling happy.

For the Mountain West News Bureau, I’m Kaleb Roedel.