

## **N.A. Tribal Assistance Construction Program**

*Donovan Antelope*

The Northern Arapaho Tribal Assistance (NATAC) program is one of the programs available to tribal members that address any home modifications or renovations they may need.

The NATAC program is available for Northern Arapaho tribal members whose income falls in the low-to-moderate level and are either homeowners, handicapped, or elderly. NATAC provides home modifications, renovations and yard work to protect the health, safety and general welfare of tribal homeowners. Tribal members applying for services from NATAC must own their homes; anyone renting a home is ineligible for NATAC services.

Weatherization and health safety is in demand by all tribal members and NATAC tries to meet this demand as much as they can since many tribal members cannot afford to pay for the repairs or construction on their homes. Many homes on the reservation are very old or are in serious need of renovations. Without these renovations and repairs, those homes run the risk of being condemned or they pose a health risk. During the winter these homes cannot stay warm without being properly weatherized and tribal members are at risk of getting sick or suffering from hypothermia. The NATAC program tries to alleviate these threats by offering their services. NATAC also does yard work such as weed control to help control insects and pests. High weeds offer places for mice, rats and snakes to hide. Mice and rats are known carriers of the Hanta virus which causes the Hanta virus Pulmonary Syndrome in humans. HPS is a deadly disease contracted from infected mice and rat droppings or urine. Anywhere that has a high rodent population, you can bet that a snake is nearby since snakes primarily prey on rodents. With a cluttered yard and dense weed growth, hiding spots are available to snakes, posing a threat to unsuspecting children and adults. Kids love playing in weeds and using their imagination to turn a cluttered yard into another planet or jungle. While playing, they normally don't pay much attention to their surroundings and may inadvertently startle a snake and get bitten. By cleaning their yards and keeping the weeds and high grass trimmed, NATAC is ensuring the safety and well being of the tribal members.

NATAC also provides services for handicapped and disabled tribal members on the reservation by assisting them with handicapped equipment. NATAC modifies homes to make them more handicapped accessible. They make homes more handicapped accessible by installing chair lifts, wheelchair ramps, handrails or walk-in showers. Some tribal members, especially the elderly, no longer have the balance and coordination they had when they were younger. Even a few short stairs or stepping over the edge of bathtub can be dangerous. NATAC has provided a solution to this problem by remodeling bathrooms by taking out conventional bathtubs and installing walk-in showers. Many elders' homes are now getting ramps put in place as well, along with hand rails so that they can keep their balance.

Tribal members can apply for NATAC assistance by filling out the work order requests at the Northern Arapaho Tribal Office. Elders, of course, are given first preference and all other work orders are filled on a first come, first serve basis. Weather and season play a role in when the work orders are completed. NATAC has completed projects all across the reservation, but any tribal homeowners who live in Riverton, Shoshoni or Pavilion city limits are required to follow city codes and ordinances for any work to be done on their homes.