

Northern Arapaho Grants Program

By Donovan Antelope

The Northern Arapaho Grants Program (NAGP) was created to provide assistance to Northern Arapaho tribal members. The NAGP receives its funding from the tribe with money from the Severance revenue and the Bureau of Indian Affairs 15% accounts.

The NAGP is overseen by Ryan Ortiz who is the director and also the Internal Control Auditor for the tribes' casinos. Ortiz operates strictly in a supervisor capacity in the NAGP office overseeing the day to day duties and making sure that the office runs as smoothly as possible. Other staff members working in the NAGP office include Ivy Robertson who is the Assistant Director who, with Ortiz, reviews all the requests submitted; Zoe Friday is Ortiz's assistant for his Internal Control Audit office; and Bennie Rigdley process and prepares the applications for review, she also prepares the check requests for the approved NAGP applications.

The NAGP follows a set of guidelines known as the Assistance regulations which are used to equally distribute and conserve the Northern Arapaho funds, prevent abuse of the NAGP by tribal members and employees, and to affirm that the tribe is in compliance with the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, Tribal Law, and any other applicable laws and treaties.

The NAGP primarily assists with any medical assistance, which includes getting monetary assistance to travel to medical appointments that are away from the reservation, lodging for overnight stays and mileage and senior assistance which may include utility assistance or home repair. Utility assistance like natural gas assistance is also looked at primarily.

Any tribal member over the age of eighteen is eligible to apply for any type of assistance with the NAGP office. The only restrictions are for those that live away

from the reservation, unless it is for medical assistance. The reason that tribal members that live away from the reservation aren't eligible for any assistance other than medical is because the NAGP office requires, when applicable, able bodied tribal members work with the NAGP day job program, which Ortiz also supervises. Tribal members are eligible for financial assistance once every four months; however they are encouraged to apply if it is an emergency situation. There is no set limit for medical assistance a tribal member receives; the NAGP will take into consideration assistance for medical requests even if the requestor has received help in the previous four months. But, the assistance will be limited to the patient only or one immediate family member.

The NAGP office accepts and fairly reviews every request that is submitted to their office. The main goal of the NAGP is to help as many people as they can with what they can. Not everyone will get what they are asking for, but they will receive as much assistance as the NAGP can give. The main request that the NAGP office will totally help with is medical assistance, which is for two days worth of assistance then after that, any tribal member that received medical assistance will have to re-apply with the NAGP office. Last year, the NAGP office had received an estimated 5,900 requests, with an average of 500-800 a month being submitted. Out of those requests, the NAGP has been able to assist roughly three quarters, or 4500, of the requests being approved.

Right now, unfortunately, the NAGP office isn't providing rental assistance or motel stay assistance due to budget constraints. Only under special circumstances will the NAGP office consider any of these requests such as, for example, a tribal member's house is burned down or severely damaged beyond the tribal member's control to the point of being uninhabitable. The other area the NAGP office is unable to assist is with any funeral assistance, which the NAGP regrets not being able to help with.

Monetary grants are not the only service the NAGP provides. During the winter, they also chop and deliver firewood for homes that use wood burning stoves or fireplaces to heat their homes. The NAGP hires part time workers to accomplish this and provided they have the workforce, they also do some yard clean up for the tribal elders homes. The last three summers, after the Northern Arapaho Tribal Sundance ceremony, the NAGP's workers have cleaned up the Sundance grounds. They also disposed of the discarded furniture and appliances that had been dumped at the Ethete and Arapaho dump sites. This coming spring, the NAGP office will be hiring part time workers for yard clean ups, dump site clean ups, Sundance Grounds clean up and various other clean up jobs around the reservation.

The NAGP office is located the Ethete Tribal Office is open from 8 am until 5 pm, Monday through Friday. The NAGP welcomes all applicants and promises to help with what they can, it may not be much sometimes, but it is help none the less and everyone deserves help of any kind.