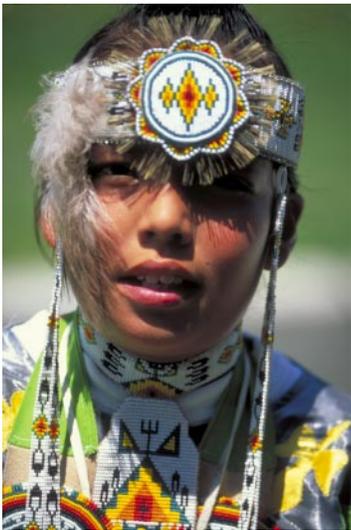


# Living in Harmony With the Land

## North Dakota tribes set an example for disaster-resistant land management



*FEMA photo by Andrea Booher.*

American Indian tribes in North Dakota have a long historical relationship with the land. Today the knowledge that comes from centuries of living with the land is being applied to disaster resistance efforts.

“It’s a mutually beneficial partnership,” said Del Brewer, a FEMA tribal relations specialist. “FEMA and the State have programs with technical expertise to assist the tribes, and the tribes have historical knowledge, unique skills and a commitment to natural resources management from which we can benefit. Together we are embarking on a new partnership towards a disaster resistant future.”

Anita Blue, emergency manager for the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, says that the tribe is taking steps to protect lives and property. “You really have to get at the mitigation end of it to help prevent these disasters from happening,” Blue said.

Partnerships and relationships form the building blocks of a safe community. In September 2000 representatives from the Spirit Lake Sioux, the Standing Rock Sioux, the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa joined tribal officials from around the region in a summit with state and federal emergency management officials. Attendees discussed ways in which all levels of emergency management could better work together to reduce the impacts of natural disasters on tribal lands.

The establishment of a Tribal Emergency Management Coordination Council (TEMCC) at the conference will help North Dakota tribes to work closely with other tribes and neighboring communities towards building disaster-resistant reservations. The council features tribal representatives and will serve as a communication link between the tribes and FEMA Region VIII, resulting in enhanced tribal preparedness.

Preparedness before a disaster is always more important than response after it’s already too late, tribal officials say. As a result, all four North Dakota tribes are now participating communities within the National Flood Insurance Program, offering insurance protection from floodwaters to those living on tribal lands.

Turtle Mountain became one of the first reservations in the region to participate in the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The money can be used to fund projects that minimize the impact of future disasters on tribal lands.

Richard LaFromboise, past chairman of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, remembers the words of his grandfather. “As the sun sets, we know one thing. It’s going to come up tomorrow. Now, what are we going to do to be prepared for it?”