

## The Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas; “Doing More with Less”

Located on the banks of the Rio Grande River, just South of Eagle Pass, Texas is approximately 118 acres of reservation land called home by the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas. In 1983, subsequent to receiving federal recognition and designated reservation lands; Tribal members, who until then, had been living on the floodplains under the International Bridge in traditional domes constructed of reeds and cattails, also known as **Wickiups**, relocated to what is now the reservation. Federal recognition allowed the tribe to



participate in Federal programs and receive much needed funding assistance. The 2000 census cited the tribal population at 420 members. Consisting of roughly 900 members today, the tribe receives nearly \$270,000 annually from the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Indian Housing Block Grant program. Equating to about \$300 per member, the Tribe effectively manages their current assisted stock of low-rent housing units and through efficient maintenance, has enough funding left over to build 1-2 **NAHASDA homes** per year. In an effort to maintain and honor the tribe’s traditional way of life, construction of the Wickiup remains a common practice amongst tribal members when they travel to Nacimiento, or “birthplace” in Spanish.

### FEMA PROJECT

From 2009-2013, in collaboration with FEMA, HUD’s Office of Native American Programs awarded a significant number of new and slightly used mobile homes to federally recognized tribes across Indian County. Tribal recipients were determined through an application process with the homes being free and transportation\ set-up being the primary cost borne by the Tribes.

During the award period, the KTTT was initially the recipient of approximately 55 FEMA mobile homes; hardly enough to put a dent in the then current waiting list. However, whether due to lack of funding or transport issues, several tribes had to decline the offer of homes, leaving ONAP with ever increasing time constraints and the possibility of tribes losing much needed

housing. Fortunately, due to the KTTT's proximity to FEMA staging sites and their extreme need for housing, the Tribe became a reliable resource to accept and transport unclaimed homes.

In all, the KTTT received 102 FEMA mobile homes at a cost of \$6,000 per home. The total cost included \$3,000 for transport and temporary storage; with an additional \$3000 to set up the home on a foundation, with skirting, porch and utilities.

Opting to not concentrate the mobile homes and create a large trailer park appearance, the KTTT distributed the homes on scattered sites and developed multiple areas with 20-30 lots. All homes are maintained by and remain the property of the tribe with the families paying \$100.00 flat rent.



By obtaining the FEMA homes, the KTTT was able to house nearly 30% of their tribal membership and fulfill a small part of HUD's overall mission by providing affordable, safe, decent and sanitary housing for low income families.

### **ICDBG FUNDING**

The Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas contributed \$800,000 of Indian Community Development Block Grant funds to construct a Community Wellness Center for tribal members. The Wellness Center, pictured at the right, provides a wide range of activities and opportunities including; a full size gymnasium, weight room, computer lab, physical therapy pool, programs for children, teens and the elderly, as well as a cafeteria with a commercial kitchen and dining area.



Periodically, families are invited to movie night in the gymnasium. Since there is not a “real” theater, Wellness Center staff inflates a huge blow up screen to project the movies on, while the families enjoy seating in the bleachers or on floor mats.

Pictured at the right is a photo of the gymnasium where Wellness Center staff host movie night, occasional basketball tournaments and other activities.



**It would be safe to say the KTTT is an exemplary example of and epitomizes the meaning of “Doing More with Less”.**