

## **Northern Arapaho Battering Intervention Program**

*Donovan Antelope*

There is a new program on the Wind River Indian Reservation that will help batterers control their anger and become more accountable for their actions against their spouses and loved ones.

The mission of the Northern Arapaho Battering Intervention Program (BIP) is to eliminate battering by providing services to batterers. They want to provide their services by voicing the batterer intervention perspective of non-violence, non-threatening behavior and respect. They also hope to promote accountability, autonomy, empowerment, and safety for victims.

BIP will be organizing intervention classes to help provide batterers with skills to utilize as an alternative to coercive, controlling, and violent behavior in their relationships. They want to teach batterers that there is a better way to solve issues in their relationships, ways that don't involve violence. The classes are designed to be delivered once a week over an eight-week period. Information included in the classes will include: Domestic Violence 101, Power & Control, Dynamics of Domestic Violence, Generational Issues, Self-Control Planning, Equality Modeling, and the Effects of Domestic Violence.

Domestic Violence is a problem in all communities, not strictly limited to Native American communities. Domestic violence is a pattern of violent behaviors including physical, sexual, psychological attacks as well as economic threats that batterers use to control their partners. BIP hopes to eliminate this cycle of violence and help individuals realize that there are different choices instead of resorting to violent acts to get their way.

The pattern of violence is often a learned behavior and some batterers know only violence to get their way. For them, if they grew up in an abusive home, that is all they know. BIP wants to help them break free from this cycle by recognizing that the methods they resort to are wholly unacceptable. BIP wants them to realize the effect they have on their loved ones is damaging and that one day the violence may escalate to the point where they can't undo the pain they've caused.

David Pulver is the Administrator of BIP and he encourages all batterers to attend classes his program will be organizing. David hopes that face-to-face communication between batterers and victims will bring an awareness of the severe damage and pain caused by violent behavior. In spite of the belief that “it isn’t wrong” or “it’s what I grew up with”, batterers need to learn the reality of destructive violence. Changing attitudes no matter how long they have been held, is the only way to stop battering behavior.

David hopes that individuals in his classes will begin to better themselves and learn that violence isn’t the answer and learn better ways to conduct themselves in situations that can lead to fighting and arguing.

Programs like BIP are sorely needed all across Indian Country. Studies in 2004 showed the leading cause of death for Native American Women was homicide, showing the level of severity of violence committed to them on a daily basis. Native American women suffer a violent crime at a rate three and half times greater than the national average. In the United States, 3.3 million children will see their mothers being abused this year. This can have a traumatizing effect on them when they witness such acts, potentially scarring them emotionally. Repeatedly witnessing these acts of violence can cause a child to grow up and repeat the pattern as a victim or abuser.

Residents of the Wind River Indian Reservation are strongly encouraged to take advantage of BIP and learn that there are other options besides violence. It is not a sign of weakness to want to better yourself and to learn that violence is not an answer for everything. Remember, there is NEVER an excuse for abuse. For more information or to enroll in this program please call 307-851-0747.