

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**National Relief Charities**

### **“Disaster Relief Aids Tribes”**

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*Jan 19, 2009, Rapid City, SD and Phoenix, AZ – National Relief Charities gives emergency provisions for tribes stricken by environmental emergencies.*

Less than one month ago, FEMA announced that federal aid would be made available to South Dakota to supplement state and local efforts to recover from the November 5-7 blizzard. The Plains Office of National Relief Charities was alerted to the impact on the tribes and responded with emergency provisions such as winter disaster blankets, emergency food packets, nutrition bars, and batteries – enough for 1,800 people.

NRC’s emergency provisions went to the communities of Wanblee and Kyle on the Pine Ridge Reservation and Rosebud, SD. Some residents reportedly went without water, electricity, and access to shopping for more than two weeks. Over 200 residents were spending the night at schools and make-shift shelters, initially without blankets, food, or water and only a generator for heat. One resident said they melted snow for 5 days to get drinking water. A retailer from Wanblee said the winds and ice made this the worst blizzard since 1949. In December, South Dakota had a second blizzard and wind-chill temperatures as low as -35 several days in a row. The northern Plains had yet a 3<sup>rd</sup> blizzard in January.

National Relief Charities is well aware of the early burdens this winter is placing on tribes in South Dakota and other states – and the impact these burdens may have later. Almost yearly, it seems that winter fuel funds expire for Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and other tribes even in the Southwest a month or two before winter is over.

National Relief Charities is a strong resource for American Indians living on the most remote reservations with limited access to basic necessities. Tribes in economically-depressed regions of South Dakota, the northern Plains, and the Southwest should be aware of NRC’s Environmental Emergency service. It is available year-round to provide emergency provisions to reservation communities when their residents are displaced by environmental conditions such as blizzards, floods, fires, water outages, and tornadoes. In 2008, National Relief Charities responded to the Supai flood, the bayou hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the flooding in Apache County due to melting snow, heat waves, the tornado at Turtle Mountain, and the blizzard in South Dakota.

*National Relief Charities is a nonprofit dedicated to quality of life for American Indians living on remote, poverty-stricken reservations. NRC is supported by a strong network of reservation partners. We work on over 75 reservations year-round in 12 states. For more information, see [www.nrcprograms.org](http://www.nrcprograms.org).*