

NATIVE DIRECTIONS INC. HEADQUARTERS:
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Native Directions Inc.

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September 9, 2024

Karen Gardner, Director
Planning and Building Department
El Dorado County
2850 Fairlane Court, Building C
Placerville, CA 95667

Dear Director Gardner,

I hope this email finds you well. We are writing in response to your inquiry on July 29, 2024, regarding our Wellness Center project under the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP).

We have recently submitted our application for grading and building permits for a single-story, 5,200 sq. ft. Wellness Center located at 2655 North Shingle Road, Shingle Springs, CA 95682, adjacent to Highway 50.

The Wellness Center is a project funded through a state grant (AB 133) awarded to Native Directions and HomeCA, and it will be licensed by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). This is part of Round 3 of the state's BHCIP, targeting various gaps in behavioral health facility infrastructure, particularly for marginalized communities. Native Directions, Inc. is proud to have 52 years of experience operating facilities similar to this one, while the two principals of HomeCA bring a combined 47 years of experience in operating adult residential facilities.

To provide more context around the need for this project, Native American communities have been identified as having the least access to essential services and facing one of the highest rates of homelessness among all ethnic demographics. The legislation authorizing projects such as this one was approved by the Legislature and signed by Governor Newsom to expedite the delivery of critical services to unhoused Native Americans, with the broader goal of fostering equality in California.

We are aware of community concerns surrounding this project, largely due to misinformation, and our design team is proactively working to address these concerns. We will collaborate with El Dorado County agencies to ensure all safety and regulatory standards are met. For example, our fire safety consultants (Elite Automatic Fire Protection Systems) have been working with the El Dorado County Fire District since May on the design of the fire sprinkler system. Listed below are some of the key issues identified and how we plan to mitigate them to ensure the safety of residents and the community:

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- **Fire Safety:** A modern wet sprinkler system will be installed in the building to provide instant water in case of fire. We have doubled the defensible space to 200 feet and ensured access for emergency vehicles, providing a 360-degree turnaround for entry and exit. We also plan to conduct monthly fire drills with a designated meeting point for quick evacuation.
- **Traffic:** The facility is accessible from Highway 50 via Ponderosa Road. We will implement staggered arrival and departure times, carpooling and van services, traffic management personnel, and ample onsite parking to mitigate traffic concerns.
- **Road Infrastructure:** The facility will be served by established roads along North Shingle Road, with easy access to Highway 50.
- **Water Source:** The facility will be serviced by public water through the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID).

The Wellness Center is not a medical or commercial facility. It will operate like an adult day program and will be open Monday to Friday, from 9 AM to 3 PM (tentative), offering services such as equine therapy and horticultural therapy. The facility will have a maximum capacity of 250 individuals and will serve Native Americans living in El Dorado County and neighboring counties who are seeking culturally appropriate behavioral health services.

The grant application required a 5% financial match from Native Directions and HomeCA, which was fulfilled using this parcel of land. As a result, the grant is tied to the land, and the facility cannot be moved to another location or county. The site was chosen not only for its environmental beauty but also because it represents a vital connection to the cultural and spiritual traditions of Native American communities. In facilitating healing, it's essential that this project provides participants with the resources they need to thrive and offers an opportunity for reconnecting to their ancestral land as the Indigenous peoples of California.

This project was discussed with the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians ("Miwoks") on June 22, 2023, during a meeting hosted by the Miwoks and attended by Regina Cuellar, Chairwoman of the Miwoks; Ramona Valadez, Native Directions' Executive Director; Patrick Prado, COO; and Deanna Pineda, Native Liaison of HomeCA, at their Shingle Springs Corporate Office.

Please let us know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this project in more detail. We are happy to meet with you at your convenience.

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Sincerely,

Patrick Prado

Patrick Prado, COO
HomeCA Inc.

Ramona Valadez

Ramona Valadez, Executive Director
Native Directions Inc.