

PATHWAYS TO SPIRIT

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HONORING THE LAKOTA CULTURE

by Carmeen Klausner

We at Pathways to Spirit take great pride in the relationships that we have developed with the people on the reservations in South Dakota. We have made many lasting friendships over the years and treasure them deeply. Often you hear of all the indignities placed upon the indigenous people. We would like to take this opportunity to share some of the traditions the Lakota people live by. Traditions that have brought strength and dignity to the survivors of a great tragedy in American history.

Recently, while attending the Denver March Pow Wow, I was enveloped in the beauty of culture, tradition, color, and sounds of a time that I thought was gone. I realized how the indigenous people have held many things of their past together. Often we at Pathways are asked about the culture and the language and why it is so important. Attending this annual event showed my heart why. Explaining it with words is harder because it is so much an experience of inner knowing that if we don't use our cultural ways, we lose something very great.

For the Lakota, every action had a purpose and was an expression of a way of life that lived in deep respect for all of creation. That is why we hear the phrase "Mitakuye Oyasin" so often. It means we are

all related. This phrase brings to awareness respect for all living things that the Creator put on the Earth. All things communicate in their own way with all other things.

The Lakota believe strongly in the power of language. Albert White Hat of the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota says in his book, ***Reading and Writing the Lakota Language***,

"language contains great power. It can be used to injure a person's feelings or to compliment their achievements. It can be used with evil intent or to honor and bless. Young people need to understand that language contains the power to give life or to take it away. As a result, it must be used respectfully." How many of us think about language in this way?

Even the tipi stood for more than lodging. Each part reminded the people of different aspects of their way of life. According to Norbert Running, *"building a tip is nothing less than re-creating or replicating the world. The first three pole*

triangle is a star. Then the next seven poles represent the directions –west, north, east, south, above, below and the center. Fire is at the center. That makes ten. The ten represent the laws of the whole world. These are the laws of respect for all of nature. They implant a mutual respect in everything. Then there are two more poles outside which allow the air to come in. That makes twelve. Twelve is for the twelve months. It also represents the twelve stars –the morning star, evening star, seven stars in the dipper and the three stars of Orion's belt." So we see even the home was built with this awareness for all of creation and a respect that all of creation helps me live a good life.

The Lakota believe that as we move into spring, "Wetu", the life force of creation begins to flow. Spring is a time of renewal and regeneration.

We at Pathways hope that within your own culture you are now beginning your time of renewal and planting the seeds of hope, health and help for all people on Mother Earth.



CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

by *Cheri Franke*

It all started with a box of books.....

It was my first experience volunteering with Pathways. We were unloading a semi filled with donated goods in the small town of Manderson, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. We called ahead to let the people know when we were coming so a small crowd was already gathered when we got there. The sight of the truck brought even more. I had no idea what was being donated. The plan was to just open the back doors and hand it all out, trying to see that those with the greatest need for an item had the first chance for it-an almost impossible task as all have an overwhelming need.

An elderly lady sat next to the door so that she wouldn't be missed in the crowd. The donations were an odd assortment for sure, everything from pots and pans to a wicker reindeer. Pathways was giving out sofas, a baby bed, high-chairs and a computer. A stroller went to a couple in the back of the crowd, a bed hefted out and carried down the street. "Who needs this?" would be the call, and a helping hand would reach up and pass it along.

The elder sat smiling with her growing pile of kitchen items; the kids peeking in to see

what treasures may be for them. Low and behold out came some bikes. I marveled how magically there were just enough to go around. Off they wobbled with smiling faces. Someone had donated some boxes of paper and eager would be artists, excitedly

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grabbed them too.

I don't remember much of what was there, just passing it on and the hands reaching out. But, there was the box of old books. They didn't look like much, maybe something that had been cleared from an attic. They were passed out too. I stopped to watch the man who took them to inspect the contents. Peering into the box I heard him explain, "I'm going to start a library." I cringed. I felt ashamed. What a pathetic assortment of books to be starting a library. He didn't care. They were a beginning, the beginning of a dream to start a library. I cried as the rest of the items were passed out.

I pondered it all on the drive back. My "middle income" life in Iowa would be luxury for the people I had seen. They were happy in spite of it all, and that was good, but I wondered what more could be

done to help them overcome the poverty. It was then that I remembered the box of books and the man's dream of a library. I inquired if they had a library on the reservation and especially one for children. They did not. Well, as we drove home the concept poured out of all of us and the more it was tossed about, the more our excitement grew. There were so many good reasons to have a library, it just had to be.

Well, here it is many years later but still as important as ever. There is so much to do ...so few to do it...it takes a lot to make a dream a reality but one of the most important parts is not giving up.

As many of you already know, we have the complete support and blessings of the people on the reservation. We have the land, and wonderful librarians here in Colorado who are ready, willing, and able to train and put the library together. We have initial drawings that are in need of refinement. The original architect is no longer able to continue the project. We are now in the process of finding a new architect to complete the drawings according to the specifications of the librarians. We continue to ask for your help in making this dream come true for the children of Pine Ridge.

ONE HEART ONE MIND

by Cynthia Cunningham

In our fall 2004 newsletter, Pathways announced the beginning of the One Heart One Mind program. We asked for the donation of knitted-crocheted baby hats and booties. We wanted to send much needed encouragement and support to the teenage mothers on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

Pathways sent the first box of handmade items to the Lakota Tiwahe (family) Center several weeks ago. Among the items in the shipment were a beautiful teddy bear with baby booties, 5 knitted sweaters, hat and bootie sets, 10 lovely crocheted blankets, 15 pair of knitted cotton newborn sized socks, 10 hats knitted in and sent from Scotland, a hat

made of hemp fiber, and many sets of wonderful knitted/crocheted hats and booties in sizes from preemie to toddler. The box was sent with Lakota friends visiting Boulder from St. Francis, SD. They were more than happy to make the delivery to the Tiwahe Center. Thanks to each of you who contributed to this effort, and please keep those knitted outfits coming! We hope to send another box to the center by the end of April.

Thanks to all who contributed. Among them are: Natalie from High Point, NC, Grandma Sharon from Ft. Collins, CO., Heather from Findhorn, Scotland, Suanne from Buffalo, NY, Daisy Rock from Portland, OR.

(who has a beautiful shop at Portland's Saturday Market), Karen from Louisville, CO, Betsey, Cathryn from Boulder, CO., Mile High Church in Arvada, CO., and S. Levinson from Storrs, CT. and S. Knight from Michigan.

The messages sent with the knitted items were as beautiful as the gifts themselves. Also, special thanks to authors Kristin Spurkland, Portland, OR., and Ann McCauley, Boulder, CO for your encouragement in knitting, designing, and networking our project.

Finally, thanks to the Lakota Tiwahe Center for your work with young Lakota families on the reservation.

PLEASE DON'T FORGET.....

The Native American Sewing Project continues making great strides in setting up sewing groups for indigenous people not only on the reservations but in urban settings in many cities in the west. We thank you for your continued support so that we may provide new and re-conditioned sewing machines and sewing supplies to all the groups. It's changing lives for the women and their

daughters.

Please don't forget to use your **Free Albertson's Community Partners Cards**. It's such an easy way to help Pathways without putting any extra money out of pocket. You can now connect your Community Partner Card

with your Preferred Shopping Card making it even easier to remember Pathways. These donations have dropped considerably over the last quarter. Please remember to use your cards as this is crucial to our operating budget. Call or email us for your Free Card.

YES! PLEASE COUNT ME AS A SUPPORTER OF PATHWAYS TO SPIRIT

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MOBILE HOME FUND DEPLETED

by *Donna Palinkx*

The need for housing on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota continues. Over the years, Pathways to Spirit has filled this need in a unique way. We were made aware of hundreds of used mobile homes being hauled to landfills in Colorado for disposal. Many of these homes were still in very good condition. Since that time we have taken homes to 162 families.

For our new readers, Pine Ridge Reservation is located in Shannon County, South Dakota. It is the poorest county in the United States. There are approximately 40,000 people living there. 80% are homeless. The housing situation has worsened over the last

few years with many homes being infected with black mold. This mold affects the respiratory systems of the young children and the elderly. Many have actually lost their lives from these conditions. These donated homes have also brought children back to their families from foster care.

Thank you to all of our supporters that have donated money to this program. Your donations have helped many families to achieve their dream of a good, safe home. These homes not only bring them a physical shelter but is also brings them hope for their future. I have personally seen their eyes light up when they receive the home. Some are in dis-

belief that such a beautiful home could actually be their own. All express their deep gratitude.

A donation of \$900 from you can pay the transportation costs for a mobile home. Any size donation is appreciated. You can change a family's future from despair and hopelessness to a sense of pride and dignity.

At this time we are completely out of funding and can only count on you, your church or organization to save a family.

Please call us if you have a mobile home to donate or have questions about making a financial donation. We urgently need your help.