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Project participants will have the opportunity to sell their produce at local farmers markets, which will ultimately generate new income streams for Lakota families.

Each garden born out of the Su Owojupi Project is unique to its creator. Gardeners employ a variety of techniques in construc-

tion and tilling and different watering methods. The produce being grown varies as well, and includes anything from potatoes to tomatoes to brussel sprouts. The project participants are also cognisant of the needs of their potential market and have included favorites such as hubbard squash to address local demand.



Several rows of potatoes thrive on a drip system in a fenced garden in No Flesh Creek of the Medicine Root District of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

“We envision this as only the start of a thriving healthy food infrastructure here on Pine Ridge Reservation and are so happy to be increasing food options for our people,” says Brunsch.



Old West Gypsy Market, located in Kyle, South Dakota, is one of several farmers market sites on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.



A hubbard squash plant grown by Lakota woman per request of community elders.

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Lakota Funds
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Quarterly chronicles of the economic resurgence movement on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

THE ECONOMIC RESURGENCE REPORT

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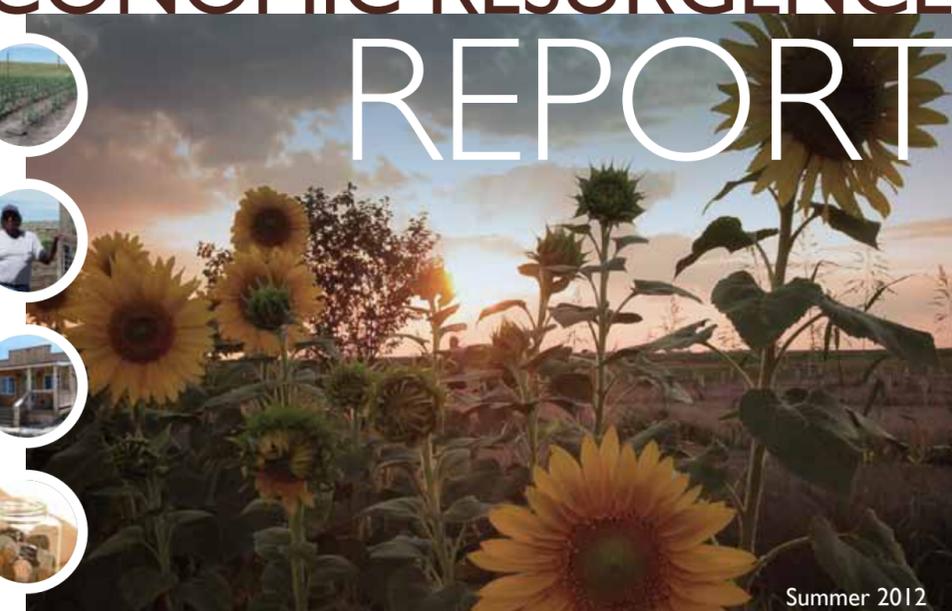
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Summer 2012

THE TRADITION OF SUSTAINABILITY

Our Mission

Lakota Funds is a community development financial institution (CDFI) leading an economic resurgence of the Oglala Lakota Ojate on the Pine Ridge Reservation through culturally appropriate strategies reigniting the traditional Lakota spirit of productivity, commerce, and trade.

THESE DAYS “sustainability” is a buzz word. We hear it in relation to the green movement - “sustainable lifestyle” or “sustainable business practices” - but for the Lakota this concept has been embedded into every aspect of our culture since the beginning. When the Lakota tribes led a nomadic lifestyle on the Plains, they made conscious choices to preserve resources for next season, next year, or the next generation. Lakota Funds applies this fundamental concept in all of its programs and services - whether it is a financial education course, a matched savings program, or its newest gardening program.

“They’re Planting” Project Takes Root on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

Native American Entrepreneurs and Gardeners Use Grants and Loans from Lakota Funds to Provide Healthy Foods to Families and Community

As an extremely rural and remote area, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is considered a “food desert”, defined as any area where healthy, affordable food is difficult to obtain. In order to go grocery shopping, most residents travel approximately 100 miles to the closest city once a month. This distance barrier forces Lakota families living on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to survive on a diet of highly processed and packaged foods that are high in fat, sodium, and carbohydrates. Fresh fruits and vegetables are a rarity, while non perishable goods are a staple in reservation living. This is a stark contrast to the traditional Lakota diet, which primarily consisted of buffalo, wild game, and roots.

Some believe this drastic shift in diet has contributed to the astounding rates of diabetes within Native American populations. It is estimated that over half of the population over 40 years old on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation has diabetes.

“It is easy to see the health problems that our people face, but reversing the trend is much more difficult than it seems - especially since healthy food options really do not exist here,” says Tawney Brunsch, Lakota Funds Executive Director.

In Spring 2011, with funding from the Citi Foundation, Lakota Funds launched the Su Owojupi (They’re Planting) Project, which is designed to establish a healthy food

infrastructure and alleviate poverty within the Pine Ridge Reservation. Through the project, Native entrepreneurs and gardeners obtain a loan of up to \$1,000 and a grant of up to \$2,000 to purchase tools, equipment, and supplies to start a garden. In addition, all project participants completed financial literacy courses and received business planning assistance. To date 26 gardens have been planted that will provide a variety of healthy fresh vegetable options where there once were none.

“The Su Owojupi Project combines entrepreneurship with aspects of the traditional Lakota value of sustainability,” comments Brunsch. “Since our culture is highly enmeshed with living off the land, it is only natural to adapt that to our modern conditions.”

In addition to providing healthy food options for their families, the Su Owojupi

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Native American Food Entrepreneurs Plant Seeds for Success

Marlene McDonald and John Yellow Hawk Grow Local Produce to Support their Families and Community

Participants in Lakota Funds' Su Owojupi Project, Marlene McDonald and John Yellow Hawk of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, have used a combination of loans and grants to plant gardens to feed their own families and infuse the reservation with fresh healthy produce. Launched in Spring 2011, the Su Owojupi Project is designed to generate new income streams for low income individuals and families as well as to mitigate health issues reservation residents face due to living in a food desert. However, both John and Marlene have found their gardens to provide so much more.

While each food entrepreneur utilizes a unique approach to gardening, they each reap rewards beyond produce. John Yellow Hawk's family has lived on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation for generations, and John remembers his grandfather and his parents farming potatoes on the very same plot of land where he lives now. "Growing up there were no jobs. I don't know how my mom and dad raised us, but I think it was on potatoes," he chuckles. Continuing the tradition, the majority of the long rows in John's large fenced garden are growing potatoes. John plans to sell most of his harvest at the local farmers market, but he also will keep enough potatoes to feed his family until next year's harvest. He estimates this will save approximately \$100 per month in food expenses.

Marlene McDonald has been growing a garden for years and enjoys the fact that her children love to eat freshly picked vegetables. By participating in the Su Owojupi Project, she has been able to expand into seven garden plots and also plans to sell some of her produce at the farmers market. "It would be really nice to have extra income. With five daughters it is not always easy," says Marlene. Prior to obtaining her loan and grant through the project, Marlene and her children dug up the soil

for their garden by hand. And, due to the reservation's limited infrastructure, they also hauled all of the water from the house to the garden in buckets. Only recently did the rural water department provide an outdoor watering system at their home.

Both John and Marlene agree that gardening is a family affair - even the youngest of children help pull weeds and water. "It gives them something to do," comments John. Marlene feels that gardening teaches her children responsibility. John hopes that his children and grandchildren will keep his family tradition of potato farming alive. Enjoying the rewards of hard work is also a family affair during harvest time. "Sometimes I'll wake up and find my kids out in the garden eating straight off the vine. You just can't get any healthier than that," says Marlene.

Gardening also offers a type of therapy to the gardener. For Marlene, being in her garden helps take her mind off of the stresses of life. With her husband gone for nearly six months on assignment for the National Guard, Marlene has been operating as a single parent and struggling to make ends meet. Adding to the discord, a wind storm destroyed her home, forcing her and her daughters to live in a motel. Still in the rebuilding process, Marlene says the Su Owojupi Project was a great opportunity that has helped turn things around for her family.

She says even though she doesn't have much to give, it is important to give back to the community. She plans to give a portion of her harvest to elders, and has planted a hubbard squash plot per their request. "The elders are always asking for hubbard squash, and I had to special order it. Now we have eighty plants here for them." Right in the center of the hubbard squash field, a pair of thunder birds, also known as night hawks, have build their nest and laid four



Marlene McDonald, pictured with three of her five daughters, will provide community elders with hubbard squash from her garden.



John Yellow Hawk plans to harvest potatoes and various other vegetables to sell at the farmers market.

eggs. Thunder birds are sacred in Lakota culture, and Marlene's daughter tells her this is a sign of good luck.

For John, gardening is a way to help him grieve the loss of his wife who died last year. "After being married twenty-nine years it is like losing your right arm," he explains. His garden helps take his mind off of things and get through the grieving process.

So Much More Than a Coffee Shop

Old West Gypsy Market Aims to Build Tourism Market and Serve as Business Incubator for Food Entrepreneurs and Artists on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation through Authentic Cultural Experience

From the moment you walk up the wooden steps onto the covered porch and through the door of Old West Gypsy Market, you feel as if you've gone back in time. Owners, Jason Schoch and Patricia Hammond, have gone to great lengths to ensure patrons gain an authentic experience of Lakota culture and prairie life while visiting the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. From antique tea cups filled with locally grown and cultivated wild teas to a gallery of Native beadwork and local photographs, visitors to the recently opened Old West Gypsy Market encounter Lakota culture straight from the source.

Old West Gypsy Market, located across from the Lakota Prairie Ranch Resort in Kyle, South Dakota, provides an intimate rustic atmosphere for locals and tourists to enjoy freshly brewed coffee, browse art and gift items, and indulge in local produce at a farmers market.

Schoch and Hammond are currently working with tour bus companies to gain foot traffic through their shop, increase sales for the vendors at the farmers market, and boost the reservation's economy. "Tour busses come through here all the time. We just want them to stop," says Schoch



Jason Schoch, part owner of Old West Gypsy Market in Kyle, South Dakota.

who believes it is important for visitors to experience Lakota culture from the Lakota people rather than from mass-produced commercialized sellers.

An abundance of retailers located in towns bordering the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation offer low-cost Native-looking trinkets for tourists to purchase, but Schoch doesn't feel this teaches visitors much about Lakota culture. In addition to the locally-made beadwork and art, the Old West Gypsy Market features items such as timsila, a wild turnip that grows in the Great Plains region and is a food staple in traditional Lakota culture. The teas made of wild herbs served at the Old West Gypsy Market provide visitors with a small glimpse of Lakota life on the prairie. While the market is starting off with a small coffee menu, they plan to expand to offer a variety of Lakota-inspired food, such as smoothies made from native wild fruits and herbs.

Schoch and Hammond have taken sustainable practices to new levels in every aspect of their business operations. They purchase supplies only from vendors who actively support nonprofits. Waste products will be composted and used for their gardens. Surplus produce from the garden will be canned and preserved. Antique items in the



An assortment of postcards and bookmarks featuring photographs of local sites for sale at the Old West Gypsy Market.

gift shop promote reuse. And most importantly, the market serves as a small business incubator by providing space for gardeners and artists to grow their business, ultimately creating new income streams for Lakota families. With an 80% unemployment rate and art and the earth as an integral elements of Lakota culture, this opportunity is the perfect fit. The Su Owojupi (They're Planting) Project launched by Lakota Funds last year, is preparing gardeners to participate in farmers markets like the one at Old West Gypsy Market.

Schoch and Hammond, who previously operated a nonprofit focused on community gardens, have a garden and greenhouse on site that will stock one booth of their farmers market. An additional three booths will be available to Native entrepreneurs who wish to sell their locally-grown produce or artwork.

"Old West Gypsy Market is so much more than a coffee shop. It is an outlet for our Lakota people to share our culture and be proud of it," states Tawney Brunsch, Executive Director of Lakota Funds who provided start-up capital for the business.



Beadwork by local artist and canned goods on display at the Old West Gypsy Market.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT



LAKOTA FUNDS is dedicated to enriching the lives of Pine Ridge Reservation youth through programs that educate and encourage habits of asset building. As such, we recently launched a unique matched savings program for grade school children through funding from the Northwest Area Foundation. The Child Development Account Program is the first of its kind on an Indian reservation and focuses on building the family core. Lakota Funds seeds each Child Development Account with a \$50 deposit and matches the participating families' deposits by a 3:1 ratio. In addition, participating children and families take part in training and education to provide a solid foundation that helps children understand the benefits of savings. Starting in the 1st grade, children attend monthly lessons that include financial literacy education and child development activities. Each family also attends quarterly meetings where they participate in financial literacy and family building activities.

SUPPORT OUR MISSION

YOUR DONATION to Lakota Funds will help make a difference in the lives of the Lakota Oyate (People). Contributions from dedicated supporters like you help put an end to generational poverty on the Pine Ridge Reservation by reigniting the traditional Lakota spirit of productivity, commerce, and trade. To make an online donation, please visit lakotafunds.org/supportform.

Lakota Grandmother Passes on Financial Management Skills to Future Generations

Denise Red Owl Enrolls Son and Grandson in Lakota Funds Matched Savings Program

A couple years ago Denise Red Owl participated in Lakota Funds' matched savings program, or Individual Development Account program, where she learned through a first-hand experience the value of saving. So when she heard of Lakota Funds' new Child Development Account program, a matched savings program designed for children as young as kindergarten age, she jumped on the opportunity. Currently, Denise's son, Presley Red Owl age 7, and grandson, Shaun Jenise age 6, are enrolled in the Child Development Account program and on their way toward saving for a brighter future.

Denise says both boys are excited about the program, which has stimulated their interest in concepts of money, banking, and saving. "I told them we need to teach them how to do their financial stuff so they know what to do when they grow up. You know kids are like sponges. They soak it right up," commented Denise. She also explained to the boys that they will be making deposits into a bank account to save for school and that they will go to classes to learn about money. "When I told them how much they will have by the time they are in 8th grade, they were like, 'Wow!'" One of the boys has even asked where his bank is located.

Denise is grateful that the Child Development Account program will give her son and grandson the knowledge they need to successfully manage their money as adults. She explains that her generation and her parents' generation didn't emphasize money management and didn't know much about it. "My parents just spent money as soon as they got it. They didn't think about savings." Without this essential knowledge, Denise ended up getting into some financial trouble of her own. She recounts her personal experience, "I got a credit card and went crazy with it. Then I got some more, and all of a sudden I had bad credit because I couldn't afford it."

Although Denise did not have the opportunity to learn how to manage her finances at a younger age, she wishes her generation would have learned about it sooner. Denise has learned from her mistakes and has built her financial management skills through Lakota Funds' matched savings program and financial literacy classes. Now, she is making a difference for the next generation by emphasizing the importance of wise resource management to her children and grandchildren.

But the benefits of saving for young children don't stop there. Denise is literally stopping the cycle of poverty for her family. Children who have a savings account are seven times more likely to go to college and earn a 4-year degree. Presley and Shaun, even at ages 6 and 7, are in a position to learn more, save more, and earn more than their parents and grandparents.