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

THE ECONOMIC RESURGENCE REPORT

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BUILDS ASSETS AND
INSPIRES SONS TO
DO THE SAME



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WOMEN



Summer 2013

HONORING LAKOTA WOMEN

Our Mission

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

ALTHOUGH THE traditional Lakota culture was a male dominant warrior society, the Lakota have always held women in high esteem. While often maintaining a less dominant role over men, women were acknowledged as critical components to the continuation and survival of a community. In today's modern Lakota communities, we see women emerging as leaders. Many of the entrepreneurs who come through Lakota Funds' doors are women who are taking control of their financial futures and dedicated to creating a more prosperous life for themselves and their families. Most importantly, they are passing these skills on to the next generation.

The Women Behind South Dakota's Minority-Owned Small Business of the Year

Marjorie and Carrie Murdock of Murdock Electric Provide Support and Leadership for Continued Business Growth

Murdock Electric, an electrical contractor based on the Pine Ridge Reservation, was recently named the 2013 South Dakota Minority-Owned Small Business of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The now booming company was started over 25 years ago by founder, Frank Murdock Sr., in his garage. But, it wasn't the work of just one man that got Murdock Electric to where it is today.

In 2006, through encouragement from Frank Sr.'s sons, Joe and Frank Jr., Murdock Electric transitioned from a Sole Proprietorship to a Corporation. It was during this transition that Frank Sr.'s wife, Marjorie, took an active role in the company as Busi-

ness Manager. Although recently retired from her 30-year career as Director of Nursing with Indian Health Service, Marjorie turned her focus to the financial aspect of the family business.

She says, "We had a system in place, but it wasn't set up for as big as we got. There were a lot of things that had to be changed. It was basically a revamp of all business transactions, and I think it has really benefited us." In addition, she used her management expertise to put other processes in place, such as disciplinary policies and monthly meetings to go over the financial status of projects, which positioned the company for greater success and continued growth.

While Joe and Frank Jr. were learning from their father's expertise and taking a more active role out in the field, a similar shift was taking place in the back office. Carrie, Frank Jr.'s wife, came on full-time with Murdock Electric in 2009, and is now being primed by Marjorie to take over the position of Business Manager. Originally going for her teaching degree, Carrie changed paths and obtained her degree in business just so she could become a more valuable asset to the family business. This has proven to be a beneficial move as she continues to soak up everything she can from Marjorie for her future role.

Both women are proud of the accomplishments of their family business and being named the 2013 South Dakota Minority-Owned Small Business of the Year. They even received a letter from Senator Tim Johnson recognizing them for their years

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of hard work and dedication to serve as a model for other small businesses to emulate.

While Marjorie and Carrie provide support for their husbands in the office and at home, they also recognize their role as leaders within the business. "We're the motivators, the pushers, the friendly reminders," says Carrie.

Marjorie acknowledges that the minds of men and women work differently, "Sometimes it's about stepping back and listening to ideas. I think people get overpowered with their own ideas and 'my way or no way,' but good leaders listen to other people." Often times, members of the management staff come to her when they are having problems. "With my expertise I can steer them to what the requirements are to have a good relationship with our employees and contractors," she comments.

She attributes her success in business management to the experiences she has in raising a family and learning to be more open to change. "Being a business woman and still raising your children to make sure they succeed in what they are doing – you have to blend all things together into some kind

of continuity where things are balanced," says Marjorie.

Carrie and Frank Jr. have three children of their own ranging from age 8 to 16, and Carrie appreciates the flexibility working for the family business gives her as a mother. "When something comes up with the kids, I still have an obligation to the company. But, there is a big responsibility on both ends. We balance it and make it work." And, when work overflows into conversations at home, she also needs to balance that. "I love working with my husband, but sometimes I just have to say, 'Enough is enough.'"

Both Marjorie and Carrie encourage other women to reap the rewards of starting your own business. Marjorie comments, "There are so many opportunities out there that women haven't even tapped into. I think they could make a go at any business that they have a desire to operate. You just have to get out there and do it." Knowing that this could be a scary leap to make, Marjorie and Carrie refer aspiring entrepreneurs to resources like Lakota Funds that could help someone build her business skills and provide the information and capital needed to be a successful business owner.



Marjorie and Frank Murdock of Murdock Electric, South Dakota's 2013 Minority-Owned Small Business of the Year.



Marjorie Murdock at her desk in the Murdock Electric office.

out the Pine Ridge Reservation. To help keep the business on its current growth trajectory, Wanbli LLC partnered with Lakota Funds to obtain a loan to purchase additional inventory and keep up with the demand for clean drinking water and coolers. Bettleyoun says of Lakota Funds, "They were absolutely wonderful. I couldn't have asked for a better group of people." Currently, Wanbli LLC separates deliveries by geographic region in order to cover the entire reservation, but this keeps Bettleyoun working day and night. As a result, she sees herself hiring a delivery driver in the future, which will be one more step in her business' continuing development.



Lynn Bettleyoun, owner of Wanbli LLC, stands next to newly installed water cooler at Lakota Funds office.



Tonia Ecoffey, most recently named Lakota Funds All Star, waters her garden that will supply reservation residents with fresh produce.

Lakota Woman Encourages Healthy Habits for Residents of Pine Ridge While Building Assets for Herself and Passing on Entrepreneurial Skills to Sons

Tonia Ecoffey Named Lakota Funds All Star

After working for the past few years on various aspects of starting a business and building her financial skills, Tonia Ecoffey is the most recent resident of the Pine Ridge Reservation to receive the Lakota Funds All Star Award. Since early 2012, Ecoffey has participated in an entrepreneurial gardening program to promote healthy eating while earning extra money, a matched savings program to grow start-up capital for her new business, and completed several training programs to help her improve her business management skills.

The All Star Award recognizes the hard work and accomplishments of those who participate in multiple programs at Lakota Funds and are working to build assets for themselves and their families. "Tonia Ecoffey is preparing herself and her sons for a successful future through a holistic approach that applies concepts of saving, education, and overall wise resource management," says Tawney Brunsch, Executive Director of Lakota Funds.

As a life-time resident of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, Ecoffey is a full-time GIS Analyst for the Oglala Sioux Tribe Department of Transportation, but has always wanted to start her own business. Through the matched savings program at Lakota Funds, Ecoffey makes monthly deposits into an Individual Development Account (IDA), a special savings account, and receives a 3:1 match from Lakota Funds. Upon completing the program, she will have a maximum of \$5,760 to start her business that will offer organic produce and alternative herbal medicines to the local residents of the reservation. "I want to offer an alternative to prescription drugs. With healthy foods and natural medicines, I believe you don't have to use synthetic drugs," says Ecoffey.

Ecoffey was able to pilot the organic gardening segment of her business last summer by participating in the Su Owojupi (They're Planting) Project that Lakota Funds offered. Through this project, Ecoffey received a loan and a grant to infuse the community with fresh lettuce, carrots, tomatoes, corn, and watermelons. While the produce sales supplemented her regular income, it also contributed to the overall mitigation of several health issues that residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation face from living in a food desert. "It was pretty exciting. We are going to have a bigger garden this year, and also plan to do more canning," states Ecoffey.

The training courses Ecoffey has completed through Lakota Funds have further prepared her for a successful business venture. In addition to a three-week business-planning course that covers all the basics of starting your own business, she also completed QuickBooks training and financial literacy training.

In addition, Ecoffey has enrolled her two teenage sons in the youth matched savings program at Lakota Funds. As a result, one of her sons was able to expand his rodeo bucking stock business through the purchase of equipment. The other is using his savings to further his education by attending college. Ecoffey feels that the program helped her sons to become more aware of finances and the possibilities that open up to you when you save money. She adds, "It has helped them to reach some of their goals by encouraging them with their finances and even their future plans."

WOMAN- & NATIVE-OWNED PINE RIDGE BUSINESS EXPANDS TO OFFER FILTERED DRINKING WATER TO LOCAL BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS

Wanbli LLC, a distributor of filtered drinking water based in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, recently expanded operations beyond their current client base of over 40 businesses and residents. The expansion was made possible through a business loan from Lakota Funds, a nonprofit community loan fund, in Kyle, South Dakota.

Owner and operator, Lynn Bettleyoun, says that owning her own business is something she has always wanted to do, and after seeing several water trucks driving through the Pine Ridge Reservation and talking to friends, she felt that opening a water distribution company would be a viable option. "A lot of the water here on the reservation is not very good quality, and Culligan's didn't have any competitors, so I figured I'd step up to the plate," says Bettleyoun.

Last August Lynn officially opened for business. She states, "I figured if I was going to do it that I would go full force and jump with both feet in. Either I would fall on my face or I would make it." Well, she is making it. Wanbli LLC offers a rent-to-own program for their water coolers, which has set them apart from their competitors and driven an increase in business. "People are really excited about owning their own cooler," says Bettleyoun.

Since opening, Wanbli LLC's client list has grown to include Loneman School, Shannon County School District, several Tribal programs, and homes through-