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Lakota Funds

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 Kyle, SD 57752
 (605) 455-2500
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www.lakotafunds.org



Rosalie Red Elk gets boost from Lakota Funds into independence

After working for 8 years for a manufacturer who sold star quilts, Rosalie took the final step in becoming an independent entrepreneur. This has been a dream of hers for some time.

Now, with the help of a micro business loan from Lakota Funds, Rosalie was able to purchase equipment and materials to start her own business. Lakota Funds offers tribal members business loans ranging from \$200 up to \$200,000 for the purpose of purchasing inventory and materials, equipment, real estate, as well as providing working capital or restructuring debt. The business, must also be located on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

The major draw in her new enterprise is that she can rightfully market her creations as authentic Native American-made quilts, which are coveted at the national and international level. She plans to eventually expand and hire other Lakota people.

When we visited her she, and her husband Ron Little Thunder, were in the process of putting together her brand new long-arm quilting machine. An impressive armature of beautifully machined ash wood, the frame spanned her whole living room with the promise of outputting large quilts of up to 10 feet in length.



Rosalie Red Elk with one of the quilts made on the new quilting machine

She was obviously more than happy to show us what she'll be able to do with her new purchase in terms of physical capacity and the number of quilts produced for the demand already at her doorstep.

One important goal of Red Elk is to produce easily affordable star quilts for traditional Lakota ceremonies. She knows what people can pay for them and since they are in constant demand, she can meet these needs within the financial means of buyers. In this sense, star quilts are important from the start, "You have to have a clear, good mind to make a star quilt", said Red Elk.

Rosalie also plans to expand even further, "... I'm going to have to get myself a bigger building next. I'll have to do advertising after this. I'm going to start out slow, working on my own, and then once I get that building. I think I've got some other people [that are interested in work] and I can get other machines. I feel good, I have dreams of things. I know it's going to start slow, but I know the customers are going to start coming fast."

If you have a dream and feel the need for financial independence like Rosalie, call the lending department for further details, Lakota Funds, PO Box 340, Kyle, SD 57752 at (605) 455-2500 by Fax: (605) 455-2585.

Lakota Funds staff strengthened to better assist the Oyate

There are still only 13 businesses per 1000 reservation residents compared to 83 businesses per 1000 people in the rest of South Dakota. That means only 16% of the businesses in our communities provide job opportunities and goods and services. No wonder unemployment on the reservation is estimated to be over 80% and, while improving, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is still one of the poorest regions in the US. These statistics present the tremendous challenges and the tremendous opportunities for Lakota Funds.



David White Bull in his Empowerment Thru Business Ownership Class with presenter

In the face of such statistics, Lakota Funds strongly believes that in order to build a more robust community, such building begins with encouraging and supporting small businesses at the root level; and it continues its efforts to build community through the tools and products they offer to the community.

In that spirit, two new Success Coaches, Kateri Montileaux and Doug Patton along with Loan Improvement Specialist, Tony Taylor from Lakota Funds have recently completed the Building Native Communities (BNC) curriculum, and have also become certified instructors in the Empowerment Thru Business Ownership business planning course.

Patton says of his studies, "I really enjoyed the training, it was intense and fast paced". Doug further states, "I especially enjoyed the group interaction during the training, everyone who attended was there to learn and to take what they've learned back to their communities."

David White Bull has been certified to teach Building

Native Communities since 2007 and in that time has helped many Oglala people understand the benefits of personal financial responsibility. David advanced his own skills by becoming certified to train the trainer.

The **Building Native Communities (BNC)** curriculum taught in Financial Literacy classes can be summarized as, "Enabling community members to realize their traditional values by learning financial skills that will help each person make informed financial decisions for themselves, their family, and their community".

Empowerment Thru Business Ownership is a six-week course, which won the Presidential award for excellence in developing entrepreneurial skills. The course incorporates economics of the Reservation. It identifies challenges and barriers, and seeks out solutions to overcome them. The Empowerment Thru Business Ownership Business Planning course teaches an aspiring or existing business owner the information and skills needed in four fundamental CORE elements of business planning.

Currently, Lakota Funds is conducting a Empowerment Thru Business Ownership session, which they like to refer to as; "Empowerment Through Business Ownership", in Pine Ridge at the College Center. The course started February 11 and will run through March 18, 2010. The next session of Empowerment Thru Business Ownership will be offered in May.

Please see the schedule below for upcoming classes, also on our website:

<http://lakotafunds.org/busSuccessCoach.html>. For further information contact us at 455.2500 or by email: kmontileaux@lakotafunds.org or dpatton@lakotafunds.org.



Student in Empowerment Thru Business Ownership

Lakota Funds connects with Pine Ridge High School youth

It's not a new undertaking for Lakota Funds to include the youth of the reservation in its efforts to raise awareness in financial matters that aim to assist the younger generation in acquiring entrepreneurial skills that will later serve them in coping with and equipping them to succeed in adulthood.

Most recently for example, the Lakota Nation Invitational's Business Plan Competition, in its third consecutive year, encourages high school students to acquire valuable business skills and tools while thinking of an actual product or service. In this competition, students present a business plan with real goals, which is presented to a panel of judges, in the fashion of a real business presentation. The competition includes essays and hands-on presentation tools such as PowerPoint, printed handouts and a tri-fold board outlining the project. In 2009, the winners were recognized publicly during one of the basketball games receiving scholarship awards of \$1000 for first place, \$800 for second and \$600 for third.

Another project of Lakota Funds involves the The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which provides training, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation programs by creating an integrated "one-stop" system and education services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. To this effect, two of Lakota Funds' success coaches and instructors, David White Bull and Tony Taylor, have done extensive work providing instruction and one-on-one training in the Pine Ridge community.

Lakota Funds has joined forces and collaborates with many individuals in the community such as Executive Director, Ivan Sorbel-Pine Ridge Area Chamber of Commerce, and chairman of Lakota Funds Board of Directors; Director Nick Tilsen of Thunder Valley, CDC (Community Development Corp.); Steve Hernandez, Educator - Community Innovation and Leadership Pine Ridge Extension Office; Debbie Stangle, Project Solutions; and Leslie Heathershaw of GEAR UP. All these individuals and groups often in tandem with many school teachers, share the same lofty goals and long-range sightedness to plan for the younger

generation, to entice them to explore its own potential, possibilities and bright horizons. And specifically,



Kateri Montileaux speaking with students at Career Day

they have joined with Lakota Funds' Doug Patton and David White Bull, toward creating a curriculum that teaches our Oglala Lakota youth the importance of, and freedom that goes a long with, entrepreneurship and financial literacy.

Bernie Hunhoff of South Dakota Magazine made an interesting point in reference to youth on the reservations in a recent article:

"Most rural counties in the West are losing population (see previous post), but not on the Indian reservations of South Dakota. Why are young people staying (or coming home) to the reservations. My theory is that the Indian youth feel a sense of place. They have a rich history that they are proud of. Many truly love their connections to the past – and they feel that gives them a future. They feel connected to that place's past and future.

So their young people find it to be a place of value even though it is hard to find good work and there are few movie theaters or good restaurants – no book stores, no Starbucks, no clothing stores. Not even a Wal-mart."

(From: South Dakota Magazine Indian Youth Feel 'Sense of Place' by Bernie Hunhoff March 28, 2006).

To this end, Lakota Funds encourages young people to stop by and share their business goals and dreams so that, in turn, they can fill those voids, which offer themselves as windows of opportunity for business and financial growth in their neighborhoods. Young people are encouraged to contact Lakota Funds by calling 605.455.2500. You can also visit us online: lakotafunds.org.



Douglas Patton talks with students at Pine Ridge High School during Career Day

Lyle Dillon — November 20, 2009

The Lakota Funds recently provided local Long Valley rancher, Lyle Dillon, with a small business loan for his cow/calf ranch operation. With Lakota Funds financing, Lyle has purchased a pick-up truck and hay for his livestock. Lyle has been a client with the Lakota Funds since 2001, when he and his uncle, Ned Bettelyoun, received funding for their ranching operation just southwest of Long Valley. When Ned passed away in 2007, Lyle took over the ranching enterprise and continued to raise quality cattle and bucking horses. Lyle stated “Lakota Funds has always been there when we were in need of funds to keep the ranch going. It is nice to know there is an organization on the Reservation helping the small Indian rancher. I would recommend the Lakota Funds to anyone who needs a loan for their business”.

The Lakota Funds recognizes the need of agriculture producers on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and is striving to meet their specialized needs. We can provide financing for a variety of uses; from the purchase of livestock feed to the purchase of machinery for farming operations. Lakota Funds can help the smaller scale ranchers like Lyle or big-time operators that run hundreds of cattle or farm



thousands of acres. The Lakota Funds has been providing technical assistance and lending services to agricultural producers on the Reservation for the past twenty-three years. For further information on agricultural loans please contact the Lakota Funds at 455-2500.

Another successful tax season

One of the services Lakota Funds enjoys offering the Oyate is free income tax preparation through the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program.

Through the IRS's VITA Program, Lakota Funds sets out

to help the community with a two-fold task; first, to help as many people as possible in preparing their tax returns at no cost to the individual, while making the return as beneficial as possible; and second, to help people understand the unnecessary disadvantage that Refund Anticipation Loans (RALs) represent.



Tawney Brunsch, Kateri Montileaux and Tony Taylor, VITA volunteers.

Many people are unaware that every time they get their taxes “prepared” before January 1, and leave the preparers office with cash or debit card in hand, they have just taken out a Refund Anticipation Loan (RAL). Fees for basic tax return preparation typically run around \$200, but the fees climb if the customer wants access to the refund immediately (access to the refund immediately requires a RAL). Lakota Funds assisted one customer who was charged \$330 because the return was “prepared” in December and took a \$400 advance (RAL). Higher refund amounts are charged a higher RAL fees, because a higher refund equals a higher loan amount.

A consumer report, “Tax Preparers Peddle High Priced Tax Refund Loans: Millions Skimmed from the Working Poor and the U. S. Treasury,” also documents the impact of RALs on the working poor who qualify for the largest federal anti-poverty program, Earned Income Tax Credits. EITC benefits are delivered as a lump sum through the tax refund system with about \$42 billion provided to 22 million low-income taxpayers last year.

The VITA Program offers free tax assistance to low- to moderate-income (generally, \$49,000 and below). Certified volunteers sponsored by various organizations (in this case, Lakota Funds)

receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country.

According to Tony Taylor, as of the 16th of March, the four VITA volunteers in the office, Tawney Brunsch, Tony Taylor, David White Bull and Kateri Montileaux, had prepared 78 returns compared to 61 last year. They assisted in obtaining \$194,360.00 in refunds to reservation clients with an average refund of \$2,492. Tony also says that this year he has regularly prepared returns with refunds of over \$8000. "That's enough for a family to make a pretty big purchase, something like a much needed vehicle or major appliance. It's very rewarding to be able to tell a family they are getting that kind of refund."

Lakota Funds hopes to assist as many people as possible again this year. The staff is available until April 15 to prepare returns at the offices in the Lakota Trade Center Monday through Friday 9 am to 4 pm. Call 455.2500 for an appointment. We are happy to assist.

An interview with new Board of Directors' member, Arvine Standing Elk

Standing Elk says, "When I retired from the workforce I felt I had reached a milestone in my lifetime, so instead of working, I decided to dedicate my journey to helping others to enhance their endeavors in starting their own business".

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THE AREA?

I was born in a log cabin at the Standing Elk estate in Porcupine. I lived on the reservation, my growing up years, left for business college after high school, graduated, and moved home to the reservation. I have been in the work force since 1962. I married Morris Brewer in 1968, moved to Topeka, KS, where he was employed.

Our two sons were born, Morris, Jr. and Scott. We moved home for a couple of years, then moved to Portland, OR. Lived there while our sons completed, elementary and high school. When they moved away to go on to school, we moved home to South Dakota in 1989. We opened our own business in Porcupine in 1990. The business was a success, we sold it, and now we are busy helping others.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE ON LAKOTA FUND'S BOARD?

I feel that with my experience of owning my own business for ten years, that I could help others out there in the community. Our youth are wanting to be entrepreneurs and start their own business. There

are challenges with our local banking communities, that typically do not make loans to businesses on the reservation. Lakota Funds is a good venue to help them with business coaching, and I like to support that endeavor. I like to be a part of reaching Lakota Funds' goals.

WHAT DO YOU BRING TO LAKOTA FUNDS?

An honest, hardworking work ethic. I believe that our word is our honor and that's all we have.



Arvine in front of Wounded Knee Creek, on the land she loves

ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO ADD?

Lakota Funds employees are an asset to our communities. I am so proud of all the staff. They all work so hard.

The work that they do is very professional. They make me feel comfortable when I meet them in the office or out in the community. They are very respectful. This is what keeps my hope up for a proud nation.

Thank you Lakota Funds.



Upcoming events and training sessions:

Homebuyers – April 6-27, 2010, from 5 pm - 8 pm. Lakota Trade Center. Kyle, SD. Instructor: Rosemarie Dillingham. OST Partnership for Housing.

Credit When Credit is Due – April 10, 2010 9 am - 4 pm. Pine Ridge College Center. Pine Ridge, SD. Instructor: Tia Jiron. Pioneer Credit.

Financial Literacy – April 24, 2010. From 9 am - 4:00 pm. Martin, SD. Instructors: Doug Patton and Kateri Montileaux.

QuickBooks & Contractor's Accounting – April 28 & 29, 2010. From 9 am – 4 pm. Lakota Trade Center, Kyle. Instructor: Mike Dell, CPA.

Empowerment Thru Business Ownership – May 5, 2010, every Wednesday until June 9, 2010. From 5 pm - 8 pm. Lakota Trade Center. Kyle, SD. Instructors: Doug Patton and Kateri Montileaux.

Financial Literacy – May 22, 2010. From 5 pm to 8 pm. College Center. Manderson, SD. Instructor: David White Bull.

Business Taxes – June 5, 2010. From 10 am to 12 pm. Lakota Trade Center. Kyle, SD. Mary K Sell. MK's



QuickBooks
TRAINING FOR CONTRACTORS

- Lunch will be provided
- Limited Enrollment
- Register early

April 28 & 29
from 9 am to 4 pm
Call Lakota Funds at
455-2500
now, to reserve your
space.

Laptop required
a FREE 30 day trial
version of QuickBooks will be
installed to use throughout
the training.

\$50 registration
(to be refunded upon
the completion of
both days)

Bookkeeping.

Financial Literacy – June 26, 2010. From 5 pm - 8 pm. Lakota Trade Center. Kyle, SD. Instructor: Tony Taylor.

Empowerment Thru Business Ownership – July 14 through August 11, 2010. From 5 pm - 8 pm. College Center. Manderson, SD. Instructor: David White Bull.

Credit When Credit is Due – July 10, 2010. From 9 am - 4 pm. Lakota Trade Center. Kyle, SD. Instructor: Tia Jiron. Pioneer Credit.