

Educational Support Programs for Red Shirt Table on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation with Southport Congregational Church

Who We Serve:

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is 2.1 million acres, with 1.7 million acres held in trust by the United States government. By land area, the reservation is the seventh-largest in the country. It is home to the lowest life expectancy, and a number of the poorest communities in the United States. There are 3,143 counties in the United States. Oglala Lakota County, contained entirely within the boundaries of the Pine Ridge Reservation, has the lowest per capita income (\$8,768) in the country, and ranks as the "poorest" county in the nation. Oglala Lakota County ranked last in the state of South Dakota for quality of life and health behaviors.

- Tuberculosis: 800% higher than America as a whole
- Infant mortality: 300% higher than America as a whole
- Teen suicide: 150% higher than America as a whole
- Approximately 85% of Lakota families are affected by alcoholism
- Approximately 58% of grandparents of Lakota families are raising their grandchildren
- Approximately 50% of adults over the age of 40 have diabetes

42.4% of the population was identified as being younger than 20 years old in the 2010 U.S. Census. By comparison, the state of South Dakota average for this demographic is 27.8%. With unemployment hovering around 90% for the past 15 years, the per capita income for American Indians living on Pine Ridge is \$7,773. The average for all reservations is \$10,543. The United States average is \$27,599.

The school drop-out rate is over 70%. While only 28.7% of the native population of Pine Ridge Reservation reports having attained a high school diploma, GED or alternative, just 10.7% of the native population reports having attained a bachelor's degree or higher. Although all of these statistics are alarming, education is the area that SCC has decided to dedicate its efforts, in the hopes that by furthering education, we can increase the quality of life and to educate the next generation in the hopes they can institute healthier and more stable life policies and programs in their community. With Red Shirt Table proficiency rates at just 10% in reading and in math, we strive to help raise those numbers. We do this in the following ways:

SCC Summer Camp Opportunities

SCC runs a minimum of one-week Summer Camp for the children of the Red Shirt Community. The purpose of these camps is as follows:

- 1) To support the education they are receiving at Red Shirt Elementary School
- 2) To provide new and different ideas, especially around reading, math and science. We also offer Art and Physical Education/Health classes.
- 3) To be "cheerleaders" for staying in school to help reduce the drop-out rate
- 4) To model the benefits of an education by talking openly about the importance of staying in school, the fun things that they learn by staying in school, the job opportunities that they have by being active High School students and the opportunity to get a college education.
- 5) One-on-One personal attention to each student as they move through their lessons to best serve their needs

The Collin Comey Angel Red Cloud School Scholarship Fund

Established in 2014 by the Comey Family, in honor and memory of their son/brother Collin who died in infancy, the Red Cloud School Scholarship Fund is open to any child from Red Shirt Table Elementary School who passes the entrance exam to Red Cloud School. Red Cloud School is private, Jesuit run school, in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. It currently has a 100% graduation rate, with 98% of the students going on to college and 2% entering the Armed Services.

Since the implementation of this program, we have provided 15 scholarships to Red Shirt alums. In the previous 5 years, only 2 students had gained entrance into Red Cloud School. The Red Shirt Elementary School directly attributes this increase interest in not only staying in school through the 8th grade, but striving to gain entrance into Red Cloud School, solely on the success of the SCC Summer Camps.

The Jake Panus Post-Secondary School Scholarship Fund

Established in 2020 by the Panus Family, in honor and memory of their son, Jake who loved his time volunteering at Red Shirt Table during our Summer Camps. Jake brought a vitality and joy to each day of camp and could always be seen with children on his shoulders or in his lap. His kind and loving spirit drew the kids to him and then they reveled in his joy and sense of humor. This fund will be awarded yearly to a student (or students) who have attended Red Shirt Elementary School and desire to go on to a Trade School, and Associates Degree or a four-year College Degree. In this way, Jake will continue to lift up, encourage and support the children he loved so much.