



Mission of Love



"You are not here to save the world, but are here to touch the hands that are within your reach."

In April 2007, I was invited by my good friend Rashid Abdu to join a group going to Pine Ridge to build a school. After thinking it over I agreed as it seemed to be something I should do. Being retired for several years I had spent my time remodeling our old home and building several buildings which were needed. Now was the time to help others and before long we were on our way.

As described by Rashid's article in the newsletter (fall-2007), work began very quickly at the site as materials and equipment were ready to go due to Kathy's three months of preparation. In six days the building was up and enclosed. Long days of hard work, periodic storms and the ever-blowing winds were overcome and we left with feelings of satisfaction for our contribution.

This past April many of us were able to return to Pine Ridge to complete the interior and exterior work to assure a late summer grand opening. Again we worked hard, fought and overcame the daily rain-mud scenario, the chilly wind, and got the job done. With Kathy's leadership and her provision of resources and materials the completed facility is both unique and functional---a source of pride to the all involved.

In looking back over my experiences at Pine Ridge, there are many things I have thought about and now share. I believe I cannot **overemphasize** how wonderful it was to meet and spend time learning from Leonard Little Finger. As a former educator, I grasped his concept of the need for an immersion curriculum at the Sacred Circle School and the pressing need to move quickly to assure there will be those who can teach using the Lakota language to make the myths and culture come alive. As time goes by, fewer individuals who will be available with that critical knowledge. I also developed many friendships with those Lakota who came to help. From them I learned about family and tribal histories, cultural practices, as well as the many problems of living on the reservation. I learned about poverty and its debilitating effects on families, issues of drug and alcohol abuse, the practically non-existent health-care system on-site, and the long-term impact of young people growing up with little hope for a better life ahead. Obviously the tribal problems are not new and probably had roots in the nineteenth century. Among the major changes forced upon the Lakota nation.....the loss of tribal lands.....the destruction of the tribe by the military war of attrition against them.....the destruction of the buffalo....the loss of great leaders and warriors who helped shape and maintain tribal practices and culture from generation to generation.....and lastly, the implementation of the reservation system to instill an agrarian society. By these and other actions the once noble Lakota ended up surviving as a 'defeated society.'



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So here we are today over a century later, knowing time is running out as the generation who knew survivors of the Massacre at Wounded Knee' steadily decreases. For the Lakota nation to survive will take much work. The greatest tool available is education. This is the message and contribution of Leonard Little Finger and the Sacred Circle School. Children must have an environment uniquely tailored to learn the tasks assigned along with teachers who are capable of seeing the ultimate purpose of continuing the Lakota Nation in all its many facets. This is an unbelievable undertaking.

As one who played a minor role in this undertaking, I hope the contribution will have a great impact for the future of the great LAKOTA NATION.

ROBERT KENNEDY
MISSION OF LOVE BUILDING VOLUNTEER

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