
Subject: Overwhelmed! Andrea Reedy - Mission of Love volunteer 10-08 Pine Ridge

Overwhelm – that's what I felt driving onto Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The first thing I noticed was the landscape...open, stark, beautiful, desolate, unfruitful. I instantly had a spark of understanding of why our native American Indian communities struggle.

A hundred years ago we set them up in a no-win situation. We forced them off fertile lands and onto the "bad"lands to become farmers. (I'm serious, The Badlands National Park is right there...and there is a good reason it's called the BADlands.) I would compare this scenario to dropping someone in the desert and telling them to make a livelihood fishing!

We took away their land, their culture, and their hope. We set up a huge welfare state. The results? High unemployment, short life expectancy, high suicide rates, gang violence, high tobacco and alcohol use, limited education opportunities, extremely limited housing, poor health care, lots of television watching, diabetes, ...the list goes on...

During my time there, Kathy and I went to the Oglala Sioux (Lakota) Housing office. I looked at the waiting lists on the wall. Some people have been waiting since 1995! Thirteen years waiting for an apartment to become vacant! It was unimaginable to me living in an area that has pages of for-lease and for-sale properties in every daily paper.

We spoke to the CEO, Paul Iron Cloud, a dedicated man who has spent his life working on behalf of his people. I saw sadness in his eyes and weariness in his being which I recognized from black and white photos of American Indian Chiefs over the past century. The need so great; the resources so limited.

As we drove around the reservation, I saw families, extended families, living in trailer homes and shacks. A majority of the structures certainly would be condemned if they were in Ohio.

Many have thrown up their hands in dismay, turned their backs, and walked away. Not Kathy Price and Mission of Love volunteers and supporters.

Kathy is dedicated to creating homes for the Lakota people. She says when The Mission of Love provides a house; parents have the opportunity to create a stable home. Where there is a home, a family can nurture and grow. Where there are families, communities are built. A strong community can save a nation, the Lakota Nation.

So that's our mission on the reservation...to provide safe housing for children and their families. It is working. These homes are not just another hand out from the government or white folk. The recipients of these homes are expected to work with The Mission of Love on their home to the extent of their finances and ability. In addition, they are expected to join our team and to "pay it forward"...to help The Mission of Love build homes for others on the reservation. They do.

I donate my resources to The Mission of Love because I know every dollar and hour of support go right to the people. There are no campaigns to finance, executive payroll to cover (in fact there's NO payroll), offices to maintain, government bail outs, or meetings in exotic places!

If you are not already financially supporting The Mission of Love, I ask you to do so. It's the perfect gift for those people in your life who just don't need any more stuff! Give them the gift of feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless. Make a gift in true spirit of CHRISTmas to The Mission of Love.