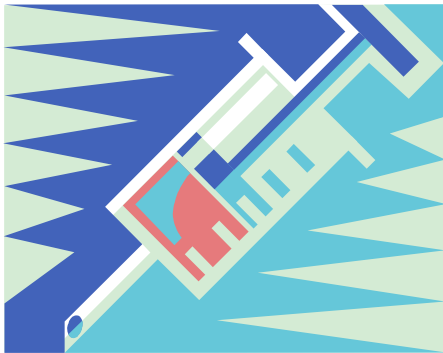




THE TATANKA SUN



Lakota Kidz – a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2004, staffed entirely by volunteers, and funded solely by private donations and grants – is dedicated to making brutal winters a little warmer, and to supporting Head Start & Holiday Gift Giving programs, for the Lakota Sioux children and elderly living in Wanblee, South Dakota, the poorest town in the poorest county in the nation.



Native Americans At Higher Risk From H1N1 Influenza

President Obama's advisory council released a report assessing preparations for 2009-H1N1 Influenza A. While the precise impact of the resurgence of H1N1 infection is impossible to predict, it indicated that Native American groups are considered high risk and have elevated risks of severe outcomes. Federal health officials recently announced \$350 million in national grants to fight H1N1, but that money is going to states and hospitals, not to the federally recognized tribes, a policy that could make reservation communities increasingly vulnerable to epidemics. Many residents live without health care due to vast travel distances involved in accessing that care. Under-funded, under-staffed

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Lakota Kidz Fuel Assistance Program Is Running Low on Gas!

According to the Farmer's Almanac, many of us are in for a cold winter. The venerable Almanac's 2010 edition predicts that numbing cold will predominate in the country's mid-section this year. Managing Editor Sandi Duncan goes so far as to say, "It's going to be an 'ice cold sandwich'." Last Fall, the folks in Wanblee were hit with a massive blizzard – and were forced to use their fuel assistance stipends before the true winter months even arrived. Winds reached 105 miles an hour, over 4,500 electrical poles were knocked out of commission and it took six electric companies and the National Guard 2-4 weeks to restore power and water to the Pine Ridge area. Lakota Kidz pitched in and doubled the amount of fuel assistance normally allocated to each family in need. Unfortunately, this has left our coffers a bit low for the upcoming six-month "cold sandwich" season. In a region where

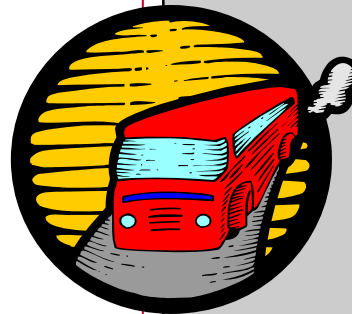
Continued on page 4

Public Transportation comes to Pine Ridge. Finally.

The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is now served by a public transportation system that will give many of the 45,000 residents a way to work, shop, attend school, socialize and go to the doctor without having to walk, hitchhike or ask

friends or relatives for a ride.

Five years in the making, funding for the estimated \$3.35 million project came from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration and the Oglala Sioux Tribe's Indian Reservation Roads Program. Eventually, they hope the transit system might offer affordable routes to Rapid City (over 100 miles away), which might provide access to more job opportunities for folks on the Rez.



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Winter comes early to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

It seems only last week that the last snow melted from the high hill near the old pipestone quarry in neighboring Minnesota. A monster blizzard late last winter took its toll in lives and in the hearts of many Lakota people. They pray that this winter will be less cruel.

The quarry of blood-red pipestone is sacred. They say it’s the fossilized blood of the people who lived before the Great Flood, the people who perished so that Wakan Tanka (the Great Spirit) could make better people. It’s the only place that pipestone can be found in abundance. The stone is used exclusively to make the bowls of the sacred Channupas (pipes) used in many

Lakota ceremonies.

According to legend, only one woman survived the flood, a very beautiful woman. As she stood at the top of the quarry hill, helplessly watching the others drown, Wanblee – the mighty eagle – hovered down and let her grab his legs. It is said



he carried her that way all the way to his home – a tall tree on Devil’s Tower in Wyoming, the only place the water couldn’t reach.

Wanblee loved the woman. Author and “Seeker of Visions” John Fire Lame Deer has explained that in those times, back when the world was new, people and animals were closer together. There was less difference between us, and more love. Anyway, Wanblee married the woman and she bore twins, a boy and a girl.

“Now there will be people again,” she said. “Washtay (It is good).”

“Washtay,” Wanblee agreed.

When the water finally receded, he took them down to the fresh, clean forest far below and told them to start a great nation. The Lakota Nation.

The twins grew up. He was the only man in the world, and she was the only woman, so they got mar-

ried and had children. And many years later there was a great nation, a strong nation of people who lived in harmony with all of nature.

The Lakota kill in reverence, and only when necessary for survival. They were the first recyclers – what they didn’t eat they

wore, slept on, and fashioned into housing, tools, weapons and art. They “had an arrangement” with Tatanka, the buffalo, whereby the two races could have coexisted forever.

“Mitakuye Oyasin (We are all related),” say the Lakota. And so we all are – not only every human being on Earth, but every animal, plant, rock, and element in our global environment. But only the Lakota are said to be descendants of wise and fearless Wanblee.

Back in 1991, when J.P. Sullivan drove his first truckload of toys, clothing and blankets from Abington, Massachusetts to Pine Ridge, he simply drove into the first village he found. He had no idea that the remote cluster of 100 government shacks was, by U.S. census, the poorest town in America.

He didn’t even know the town’s name: Wanblee.

—Steve Martin



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IN MEMORIAM: ERIN LEARY 7/01/93 – 8/6/09

Lakota Kidz is very sad to announce the passing of one of our talented volunteers, Erin Leary, who was killed in an automobile accident at the young age of 16 on August 6. Erin had a short, but nevertheless remarkable life. Shannon Leary wrote this beautiful college essay about her little sister last Spring. Erin, may the Great Spirit watch over you, and may you be at peace.

“Stop Making Sense”*

by Shannon Leary

“So they almost named it Camp Craps-a-lot!” Her red hair glistens as it shakes with the giggles that course through her body. She’d be a dead ringer for a robust teen if not for the hospital bracelet resting lightly on her wrist, i.v. marks freckling her pale forearms. Erin slips into a hospital gown as easily as she does a black hoodie and Converse, and looks just as great either way. As a result of the unpredictability of her illness, Erin’s personality manifests itself with duality and a tenuous, effervescent beauty.

Colitis is a chronic disease caused by an overactive immune system. It causes the immune system to attack the mucosal lining of the colon, causing internal inflammation and hemorrhaging; essentially the body rejects its own colon. Colitis is incurable, and the havoc it wreaks on the sufferer’s body can only be lessened by heavy doses of oral and intravenous medication. When the medications ultimately become ineffective, people with Colitis face the removal of their large intestine.

Erin is my sister, my friend, my

confidante. She’s fifteen, two short years my junior. The first visible effects of her disease, prior to her diagnosis, began in October 2005. Erin began bleeding internally, and then she lost over thirty pounds in the space of one month. We didn’t know what was wrong, and it was the worst nightmare I have ever experienced. My immense love for this young woman grew as her days of illness stretched longer. Erin was diagnosed two months later, and within a short while was hospitalized again, when her skin turned a pasty white, and then yellow; at this time Erin began a regimen of twelve different types of medication.

Erin’s steely willpower over the insurmountable challenges of her disease has greatly influenced my personality, my outlook on life, and my feelings toward our world. She endures the hospital visits, the nausea, and the pills. She’s a brave girl who has learned much from her disease, as well as taught me a lot about hope, and about being scared and valiant at the same time.

Watching Erin overcome tasks and problems that seem unconquerable has given me a powerful perspective on the things in life worth doing, and worth doing well. Erin’s unending stamina has shown me the value of health. It has taught me to appreciate the simple splendor of life, as well as the beautiful, tenacious person she is. Erin has brought me to another very important realiza-



tion; this is our shared world. It is my world. I want to change it, to improve it, for her. My immense love for Erin has taught me that if having her in my life is worthwhile, then so is working to improve the conditions of this world that we inhabit. I have found this immutable drive within me, to help change our shared world. I feel it is my conscientious obligation, when I have the power, to do so. I have the ability to change this world, to work for progress and peace. The tenacious resolve I have learned from Erin resonates within me, always echoing in my heart. I’ll carry her within me, and together we’ll change the world. Go ahead and watch; I’m going to do it.

On this particular day, one out of many, Erin is sick again. She is hemorrhaging internally. When will she be hospitalized? We know that time is running out, that soon she will need her large intestine removed. The tenuousness of her illness teaches me to appreciate the beauty of every individual day, as we reflect on the possibilities of the future. Life changes; suddenly, aggressively, for the better or for the worse. As I clutch her to me, and support her, it is another lesson learned from the difficulties of her illness.

**“Stop Making Sense” is the title of a Talking Heads album*

UPCOMING EVENTS

“STOP MAKING SENSE”: A MUSICAL TRIBUTE TO ERIN LEARY

Saturday, November 7th; 5:30 – 9 PM; New England Wildlife Center, \$7 donation requested per person

What better way to celebrate the life of a young woman who loved music than to hold a concert that she herself would have loved to attend. Please join us at our youth-oriented concert in Erin’s memory, featuring popular local bands such as Demo Demo, The A.R.E. and Trag Wag, Andre Kim and the Charter All-Stars will open the event, which is an all-ages show featuring alternative, punk and ska music. This music is geared for young adult tastes, and recommended attire is tie-dye or rock band t-shirts. Non-alcoholic beverages and light snacks will be sold at this event. At the request of the family, all proceeds will benefit the Erin Leary Scholarship Fund and Lakota Kidz. To order tickets online, please email Info@LakotaKidz.org.

DAY OF MOURNING; THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH AT 12 NOON COLES HILL, PLYMOUTH

“We Are Not Vanishing. We Are Not Conquered. We Are As Strong As Ever.”

These are the words you will find on the United American Indians of New England website (www.uaine.org). Each year, members and supporters of Lakota Kidz participate in (and cook at) the Day of Mourning. While most Americans celebrate Thanksgiving, this is the day Native Americans remember those who gave their lives in the struggle against oppression. It is also an affirmation



Day of Mourning, 2008, Plymouth, Mass.

that history has not diminished or demolished them. Meet us on Cole’s Hill, across the street from Plymouth Rock, at noon on Thanksgiving Day. Please bring something for the pot luck social afterward.

NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE DAY FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH

For many American Indians, Thanksgiving is a day of mourning, given the displacement and disaster that befell their people in the wake of the Pilgrims. Now, for the first time, the

day after Thanksgiving will be observed nationally as Native American Heritage Day. The Native American Heritage Day 2008 Bill encourages the United States to create stronger public awareness and understanding of Indian country, their culture, traditions, language and the strength, honor and patriotism of their people. NIGA Executive Director Mark Van Norman said, “Native Americans have been seeking a day of recognition since 1912. This day honors the original Native Americans, their strengths, wisdom and fight for freedom, and it recognizes the continued vitality and beauty of the Native American cultures.”

LAKOTA KIDZ ANNUAL NATIVE HERITAGE CELEBRATION PLANNED FOR

WINTER 2010
Did you have a great time at last year’s Fall event featuring the incredible sounds of Inca Son? We have every intention of repeating this terrific event, but have opted to wait until February or March 2010 — so we’ll all have something to look forward to during the dreary winter months. If you’d like to join our mailing list & receive an email once we schedule this event, please visit our webmaster at www.LakotaKidz.org.

Fuel Assistance Low on Gas

Continued from page 1

entire families struggle to survive on a combined income of less than \$3,500/year, death from exposure within one's own home is a common occurrence during the cold winter months. Lakota Kidz was able to provide 25% of the residents of Wanblee with fuel assistance for a month last year – and would like to do the same in 2010.

In Wanblee, extended families living under one roof is the norm. A donation of \$50 will heat a home for a week, and that often means warming the hearts, and toes, of 15 people or more. Please consider giving to our Fuel Assistance program, by sending a check to: **Lakota Kidz, PO Box 696, Hull, MA 02045.**

Lakota H1N1 Virus Risk High

Continued from page 1

medical facilities and outdated or non-existent medical equipment on the Reservation make medical care difficult to obtain even in normal conditions.

How You Can Help

The Crazy Horse Elementary School is in need of donations of Kleenex, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes. If you'd like to help out, please check out our wish list at Amazon.com under the wish list name of "Lakota Kidz Swine Flu". All you have to do is access the Lakota Kidz Wish List, place a tax deductible order and these items will be shipped directly to the elementary school.

NEWS & NOTES

Deliver a Little Holiday Cheer to the Poorest Children in our Country

Help us make the holidays a little brighter for the children of Wanblee. Sixty-three percent of the kids in Wanblee live below the poverty level and as such, many of them have never received a new coat or a holiday gift. Our Adopt A Child program allows you to make a difference in a child's life during the holiday season, through a tax-deductible gift donation.

Lakota Kidz has made it very easy to donate this year. Check out our Holiday Wish List at www.Amazon.com (under the Wish List name of "Lakota Kidz Holiday Gift Program"). You'll see lots of NBA & NFL clothing items — we choose "hoodies" (to keep the ears warm) in L/XL sizes as the kids often wear multiple layers of clothing to keep warm during the winter.

Amazon ships the gifts directly to our volunteer on the reservation, who will personally deliver the donations to the families before the holidays. Shipping to Wanblee takes 7-10 days, so we would be grateful if you made your online purchase before December 12th.

Last year, we helped over 100 children had a happy holiday, thanks to your generosity. This year, we hope to exceed that goal! Happy holidays & pilamaya — thank you for the blessings you send.

Make A Difference Without Spending A Dime

There are many ways you can help our neighbors on Pine Ridge Reservation. Best yet, few of them cost little or no money! Whether you want to recycle an empty toner cartridge, buy a book or crochet an afghan, you will find a variety of ways to help at Friends of Pine Ridge (<http://www.friendsofpineridgereservation.org/projects>). If you would like to host your own donation drive, please contact us at Info@LakotaKidz.org.



Support our favorite cause — buy a Lakota Kidz t-shirt!

These heavy-weight, pre-

shrunk 100% cotton shirts look and feel terrific. Best yet, 100% of all profits from the sale of these shirts goes to help the folks in Pine Ridge.

Order yours at

<http://www.lakotakidz.org/shirts.php>

No funds were used to create this newsletter – all paper & printing were donated by Digital Publishing Solutions of Somerville, MA



LAKOTA KIDZ

P.O. Box 696

Hull, MA 02045

Phone: 781-925-9395

Email: info@lakotakidz.org

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can mail a tax-deductible check to:
*Lakota Kidz, PO Box 696,
Hull, MA 02045* or go to
www.lakotakidz.org and
make a donation via
paypal.

We're on the web:

www.lakotakidz.org

LAKOTA KIDZ: Who We Are and What We Do

Pine Ridge, the poorest county in America, is a place where yearly income averages \$3,417 per family, nearly 97% of the population lives below the federal poverty level and unemployment is about 85% (the nearest two cities are 110 & 350 miles away). The average life expectancy on the Reservation is 45 years old and the infant mortality rate is 300% higher than the U.S. national average. More than half the Reservation's adults battle addiction and disease. Winter lasts 5-6 months, and temperatures often reach -40 degrees. Over half of the homes are substandard government-provided housing units infested with Black Mold, which wreaks havoc on the health of infants,

children, elderly, and those with compromised immune systems. There is a 10+-year waiting list for housing. As a result, it is not uncommon to find large extended families of 15-30 people living under one roof. Over one-third of these homes lack basic water and sewerage systems, as well as electricity.

The poorest town on the reservation is Wanblee. The mission of Lakota Kidz is to help the children and the elderly of Wanblee, and give them hope for the future. From this mission, our Fuel Assistance, Head Start and Holiday Gift Giving programs were born.

Lakota Kidz operates on a shoestring budget and is able to put 90-95% of funds raised directly into our programs.

Everyone volunteers their time, most of our supplies are donated (like the paper this is printed on), and we don't have any fat cat salaries. We cannot change the past of our Native American neighbors, but with your help, we can change their future.

FUEL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Two of our members live on the reservation and help us identify and prioritize families in need based on factors such as family size, income, number of children/elderly and heating systems (wood stove, propane, electricity). We set up an account with a local propane vendor and open a non-transferable account for each of the approved families. Each family is allotted a certain amount of fuel

per month. We receive and monitor monthly statements from the fuel company to ensure that fuel is distributed equitably and according to our specifications.

HEAD START PROGRAM

Head Start, a national program administered through the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, serves the child development needs of preschool children, birth-age 5, and their low-income families. Federal funding for the program has been reduced over recent years. Lakota Kidz works with Oglala Lakota College, which administers the program, to determine areas of need.

HOLIDAY GIFT GIVING PROGRAM

Please see page 4 for information on how to participate.