



# FACES OF POWER

REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY



# YOU HAVE HEARD US SAY IT BEFORE.

But it is worth repeating.

And repeating.

And repeating.

Change doesn't happen overnight.

But with an idea, and people. With drive, and grit.

With hope, and prayer, change does start to reveal itself.

For more than a decade now, Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation has been a place—a home—for our community on the Pine Ridge Reservation to build a future for one another. Whether we are building homes or building a person's trade, every action we've taken has started with a new idea that has energized our community to make it their own, nurture it and evaluate it, build coalitions, and implement it.

We've had our fair share of challenges and lessons learned along the way. But no matter the outcome, every action resulted in power.

Personal power.

And community power.

Meet some of the people behind our movement.



# YOU SHOULD KNOW DEMETRIUS BLACKSMITH.

Demetrius Blacksmith stepped back to look at the work he and his team had just completed on one of Thunder Valley CDC's newest homes. It was a moment he won't soon forget.

The first solar panels had been added. "It made me proud of my crew," says Demetrius, a construction worker and solar panel installer at Thunder Valley CDC. He has been part of our Workforce Development Program, which builds the capacity of local community members to develop skills necessary to improve their health, financial literacy, education planning, and personal growth.

Over 40 community members have participated in the program. Demetrius is one of many who are taking the skills they've learned to start a construction company that will work to build Thunder Valley CDC's next homes. The experience, he says, has challenged him and pushed him to grow personally and professionally.

This isn't just about learning how to be a contractor, or to install solar technology. It is continuing education at the trade-level and on the social and emotional level. Participants learn everything from how to handle stress and heal from trauma to budgeting and creating resumes.

"I've really been working on my trade," Demetrius shares, including fine-tuning his carpentry skills. "We've had mentors from all backgrounds, so I'm getting a different view of everything. The people around me—around this program—are really great. I wake up every morning looking forward to work."

This year, solar panels are being added to the first seven homes built in Thunder Valley's Regenerative Community. The community center, apartment buildings, and 14 additional homes that are either underway or planned will also feature solar energy. It is something that Demetrius is now an expert at.

The panels, he says, represent so much more than new energy. They speak to a larger, deeply-held belief on the reservation. "We are implementing a renewable energy approach on the reservation," he says. "We are against oil pipelines and the power associated with that. With solar panels, it not only decreases costs for the homeowner, it leaves less of a carbon footprint on earth."

Thunder Valley CDC has accomplished what many have been unable to do, he adds. "People say they want to do things, but never do. Thunder Valley actually moves forward on things. It's astounding."



We're a launching pad for new social enterprises that are owned—and run—by local people. In addition to the construction company made up of community members from our Workforce Development Program, a new women-owned quilting cooperative has formed to make and sell stunning star quilts at local markets, and online.

Learn more at [www.thundervalley.org](http://www.thundervalley.org).



## YOU SHOULD KNOW STAR MEANS.

Star Means hopes that when children on the Pine Ridge Reservation see the construction continuing on Thunder Valley CDC's new housing development, they take notice of who exactly is doing the work.

"I hope they see it's our own people building homes," says Star, director of the Housing and Home Ownership Program. "It is amazing to see. I hope our people realize that home ownership is possible in their community."

Thunder Valley CDC launched the Thikaga Construction Company as part of the community development corporation's Workforce Development and Social Enterprise Programs. Thikaga means "building homes" in Lakota, and the company will build more than a dozen additional homes on our 34 acres in the years ahead. A total of 21 homes will be built in the development, which will also include a community center and apartment building.

Most of the new homes already built have been purchased—signaling a momentous achievement not only for the organization, but for the local people who are getting the keys to their new home for the first time. It is serious progress, she says, for a reservation community that faces a shortage of more than 4,000 homes.

"We've come a long way," she says, pausing. "And we have a long way to go. It is exciting."

Many people who do not have a home live with relatives, and therefore don't identify themselves as homeless. "On Pine Ridge, there are families bunked up in one home—sometimes up to 21 people," she says, and that creates other problems. "It causes social issues. Kids can't get adequate sleep for school or go in a corner and read a book. It goes deeper than people not having their own place."

Equally important for the community has been making great strides in financial literacy, Star adds. "Taking out a home loan is still so new in our community and we do see a lot of credit issues," she says, including high interest rate car loans on credit reports. "But we also see success as they are helped out of those loans."

Thunder Valley CDC provides classes in credit and lending as well as classes for new homeowners. "We are committed to giving them the tools to be successful," she says. "And it is exciting to watch more families become interested and able to own their house. People don't have to settle anymore. They can have a quality stick-built home. It's possible. It's affordable. And it is happening right now."

Angel White Eyes is one of the first community members to purchase her own home in our regenerative community. For Angel, having her own home means that the possibilities are endless. "Before I only dreamed of having my own home, but through Thunder Valley CDC, I was given the opportunity to make that dream a reality. Now I see that anything is possible," she says.

Learn more at [www.thundervalley.org](http://www.thundervalley.org).

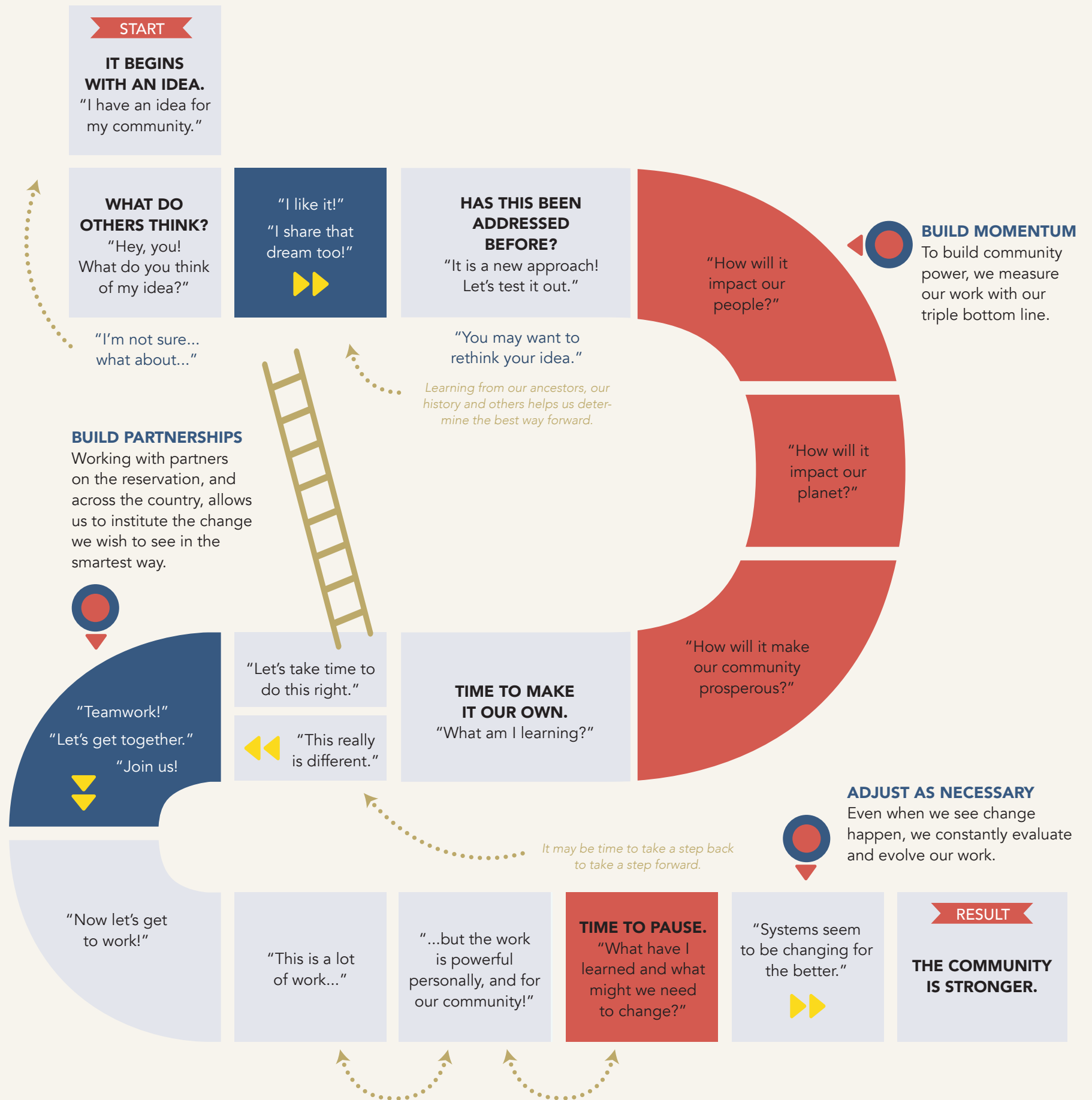
# HOW DOES CHANGE HAPPEN?

Every program, every initiative, every action we take at Thunder Valley CDC follows an intentional path that allows for starts and stops, the chance to step back when we need to, and to move forward when the time is right.

Every step of the way, we carry our foundational values of empowerment, regeneration, equity and sovereignty with us.

The journey reveals our ecosystem of opportunity, an adventure that is quickly becoming a model for communities on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and elsewhere.

Go on the journey with us.



## YOU SHOULD KNOW OTTO CUNY.

Otto Cuny landed his dream job on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

"I've never loved a job so much," says Otto, who works in Thunder Valley CDC's Lakota Immersion Childcare Program. He is a childcare provider for kids ages three to five years old. "It's been my goal to learn the Lakota language and I just never knew how to start."

Now he does. And while Otto isn't fluent, he soon will be.

Between spending his days in the classroom and Lakota language teaching workshops, the 29-year-old is learning so he can teach, and teaching so he can learn. It's the kids that keep him motivated. "Every day I'm just so happy to be here," he says with kids laughing and learning just behind him. "They are so smart. It's amazing to watch them turn into fluent speakers."

For Otto, it means that his work really isn't work. He is continuing a family legacy of the language—a circle of culture and traditions. The more he learns, the more he thinks about his grandmother, who recently passed away. "She was a fluent speaker and I had her for 28 years of my life and I only learned 'good morning,' 'good night,' 'dog' and 'horse.'"

"Learning the language is how I honor her."

So, too, does he honor her by teaching it to others. "I don't have kids, but my nieces and nephews come to my house and we work on the language together," he says. "It keeps me learning more. I wish more kids in every community would get involved with the language."

Teaching has taught him humility. "I'm learning that it is okay to mess up," Otto says. "Learning through immersion is difficult. The first month, it was hard, but once I learned how to read it, it started flowing," he says. "It's hard to stay in Lakota. I catch myself using English."

It is his kids—his students—that keep him on track. "Some of the kids are fluent and they take turns helping with activities. To have their trust and their energy and their happiness keeps us going."

Otto adds that the country is experiencing a Lakota language resurgence and Thunder Valley CDC plays an important role in giving the local community tools to learn and pass it on. "We are an organization that loves to help people," he says. "I really like what we are doing in our community, from the housing to the chicken eggs. Everything the reservation needs is here and I hope it grows bigger."



We are working with our community to create fluent speakers, build confidence, and increase educational opportunities through innovative solutions that increase daily access to Lakota language. This starts with our own team at Thunder Valley CDC, where every single staff member participates in Lakota language classes.

Learn more at [www.thundervalley.org](http://www.thundervalley.org).



## YOU SHOULD KNOW JENNIFER IRVING.

Space and energy. They are two of the best assets Thunder Valley CDC can offer its community on the reservation. “People can get bogged down in the day-to-day work,” says Jennifer Irving, deputy director who leads our regional equity work.

Thunder Valley CDC has the unique ability to take a closer look at what is working well, and what is not, and help usher in change. Jennifer says that means identifying partners who can help make that happen, from tribal leaders and the federal government to schools and small businesses. “Our intention is to identify folks willing to think outside the box,” she says.

Their work has made significant progress since the reservation was designated a Promise Zone during the Barack Obama Administration, a marker that allows organizations in designated Promise Zones like Thunder Valley CDC to work hand-in-hand with a local United States Department of Agriculture liaison, receive points on select grants, and utilize AmeriCorps vistas.

The Promise Zone work was locally driven, Jennifer says, with the greatest needs identified as infrastructure and economic development. That’s where Thunder Valley CDC came in.

“If we want better infrastructure, we need a plan then,” she says. “If we want 20 small businesses, where will they go? Are there places that are shovel-ready? If not, what can we do to identify places?”

Through Thunder Valley CDC’s Regional Equity work, Jennifer—and others across the reservation—have been creating the financial, political and legal infrastructures needed in any community. The work, she says, is not only disrupting the status quo by building community power, but it is also creating opportunities for people to come together to find innovative solutions to long-recognized challenges. “Sure, we can throw money at anything, but we need to ask, ‘What are we doing and how can we do it better?’” she says.

Asking that question, over and over again, informs the way Thunder Valley CDC provide tools to help people reach their goals in the future. Jennifer says it makes her optimistic about what is ahead.

“If you would have told me that someday all the school administrators across the reservation would sit down and discuss curriculum and optimization, I wouldn’t have believed it,” she says. “But it happened. People want to come to the table. They have ideas and they want to talk about them.”

In 2014, the White House designated the Pine Ridge Reservation as a Promise Zone. Working with local partners, we established goals to create quality jobs, increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, reduce crime, provide affordable housing, and build infrastructure through a thoughtful, systematic approach.

Learn more at [www.thundervalley.org](http://www.thundervalley.org).

# YOU SHOULD KNOW NEVADA BRAVE.

Nevada Brave has heard it. And he's felt it—the rally cry of support behind him as he grows into adulthood.

Nevada is one of many youth on the Pine Ridge Reservation growing in confidence thanks to the investment of time our community is making, and through programming like the summer youth leadership camps at Thunder Valley CDC.


Nevada is a 15-year-old high school student from Porcupine, and he spends much of his time at Thunder Valley CDC discovering his talents, learning new trades and developing skills for the future. He has participated in our youth leadership summer program, which he says taught him two important things he intends to carry throughout his life: responsibility and hard work.

For eight weeks during the summer, students shadow employees, plan community events and learn skills like carpentry to gardening to farming. Student participants are between 13 and 17, offering the chance for older participants to mentor some of our younger youth. Nevada is a leader by nature.

"It's fun to teach younger kids new stuff," he says. And on the flip side, there are times when younger people can provide a fresh perspective to him as well. "Sometimes we have good ideas that adults don't think about," he says. "Being a leader is pretty cool."

Aimee Pond, youth leadership initiative director, says Thunder Valley CDC's youth programming during the summer—and throughout the year—is designed to provide fun and culturally-relevant activities that will help students develop leadership skills and build their resumes. "We also help them create individual success plans," she says, whether that means helping them save money, get a driver's license or apply for college.

Giving youth a boost is important work because it's going to have a long-term impact on the community, she adds. "It's huge because it's what we need to make change and make things better for upcoming generations."



Fifty percent of the population on the Pine Ridge Reservation is under the age of 18. What an opportunity and positive asset this is for our community. Through Youth Leadership Development Initiatives throughout the year, we're building the power of our youth to tackle tough challenges head-on today... action that will make a lasting impact on our community for decades to come.

Learn more at [www.thundervalley.org](http://www.thundervalley.org).





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[www.thundervalley.org](http://www.thundervalley.org)

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# Lakota Language Initiative Thunder Valley CDC

2017 Mid-Year Report



# A Year of Growth

Now in our fifth year of operation, and our second year fully under the umbrella of Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation, the Lakota Language Initiative has seen yet another year of impressive growth and exceeded expectations. The most significant addition to our program in the past year was the Kindergarten immersion, housed at Red Cloud Indian School, which began this past August. Meanwhile, our other core initiatives - the immersion preschool, adult second-language learners' program, Lakota language curriculum initiative, Lakota multimedia/literature development project, and wellness initiative for adolescents - continue to succeed at fulfilling our multifaceted ambition of disseminating the Lakota language in a wide variety of ways to a diverse set of learners.

"Uŋčǐ Makhá ektá épazo we," says Savannah Greseth to the child she is holding. The child then points to a picture of the Earth. "Wičháŋpi thózi kiŋ épáŋan ye," Savannah says melodically, and the little boy then touches the green star. "Wašté!" she says (meaning "Good!"), and she touches the star too.

As both a daycare provider at our Lakota Immersion Childcare program and a participant in our Second Language Learner (2LL) program, Savannah is deeply active in our Lakota Language Initiative, as are all of the daycare providers. For instance, although language instructor Lora Catches often offers support in the daycare classrooms, she also spends a significant amount of her time creating innovative and engaging materials for the program's curriculum.



"Even though they are young, they understand," says Lora about the kids. "They are excited about learning about the Moon, the stars and all the planets. We're even building a rocket ship for them so they can learn and play at the same time."

Lora compiled lists of facts on the Moon, stars, and the planets - all translated into Lakota - along with outer space playtime sentences that provide the kids with a larger vocabulary for expressing their imagination. In addition to teaching the kids, these sentences also help the daycare providers expand their Lakota vocabulary and fluency.

"In the end, we are not only trying to create Lakota language teachers for the future," says Language Coordinator Peter Hill. "We want them to be able to do whatever they want, knowing that they have the ability to speak their heritage language. That way they can pursue careers as Lakota-speaking architects, Lakota-speaking entrepreneurs, or Lakota-speaking astronauts, where their ability to speak Lakota is not what defines their aptitude for such work, but a core characteristic that no one will ever be able to take away from them."

# Immersion Daycare



With our oldest cohort graduating the daycare for the Kindergarten classroom last summer, we were given the opportunity to see how children who had been in our program for four years would fare in a mainstream (albeit immersion) elementary school classroom. The fact that they have succeeded tremendously has made us even more excited to see future age cohorts join them in the upcoming years. In the meantime, the daycare program continues to fire on all cylinders.

Enrollment currently stands at 20 children (every year we bring in five more toddlers, as we graduate the five oldest kids to the elementary), and we are maintaining an enviable ratio, with ten staff members working to help the program run smoothly. These adults are fluent speakers and accelerated second-language learners, tribal elders and college-aged young adults, teachers and caregivers and curriculum overseers and food preparers. We are exceedingly lucky to have such a strong, talented, cohesive staff, who are all fully committed to the program's mission and its success, and who put the children first in every way.



The students themselves are eager learners, and they are rising to the challenges of the immersion daycare setting on a daily basis. In their age cohorts, they do a variety of fun and developmentally-appropriate activities, all in Lakota of course, designed to stimulate them and teach them about the world they live in. This past month, the children explored the Solar System and its planets, using a hands-on unit that we created especially for them. Next month, they will learn about Lakota ceremonies, and also about love, in honor of Valentine's Day. They continue to perform impressively well on their regular learning assessments, on average advancing at least one proficiency level in reading and speaking between pre- and post-assessments each year.

As in previous years, we have seen a huge benefit from the abundance of Lakota literature and media we have accumulated to date (nearly all of our own creation). This has allowed students to engage in significant language learning outside of structured classroom activity time, particularly during downtime and even outside of the daycare setting. Students engage in self-directed learning through iPad applications that we have adapted for Lakota, a self-paced early reader program, print books, educational videos, and animated songs.



We continue to teach weekly parent language classes in order to encourage parallel Lakota use in the children's homes. In addition to their intrinsic incentive of wanting to learn Lakota so that they may keep up with their kids' language use, we offer parents a rebate on their weekly daycare fees for all who attend these classes. As a result, the participation rate has consistently been over 90%, even in the dead of winter!

# Second Language Learners

The Second Language Learner (2LL) Program has recently undergone an overhaul meant to ensure that it is a rigorous and intense Lakota language program that is able to produce fluent speakers at an accelerated rate. The second language learners have been through a variety of language classes, grammar requirements, sentence learning, and one-on-one lessons with fluent speakers. Over the past several months, the program has worked to identify and weed out what had been impeding the progress of our learners, while identifying and tailoring methods to ensure success.



The 2LL program has been revamped to emphasize conversational speech, in order to pull our learners out of their shells and help them to speak extemporaneously without anxiety. Each second-language learner is required to do a one-on-one or group lesson with another learner (or more) using a mock conversation and pictures to guide the dialogue. After a week of using the cards, the learners are able to remember the core of the dialogue and can carry on the conversation themselves. The following week, they add on their own sentences in order to make the dialogue more complex.

The learners are also given 14 new sentences every week that are in Lakota, and they must utilize available resources – whether the dictionary or a fluent speaker – to translate and learn them. At the end of every week, they are tested to ensure accountability and continued learning. Over the past eight weeks, 112 new sentences have been learned by the second-language learners. Furthermore, each learner must complete an entire 10-unit, Lakota TPR (Total Physical Response) curriculum done over a course of three months. The learners also signed a contract, effective January 2017, that no English would be spoken during working hours within the daycare building. This has been quite a challenge for the learners, but they are certainly up to it and are giving their all to follow through.

In regards to grammar, we created a group session to allow all the second-language learners to sit down as a cohort to complete a grammar lesson together. Prior to this year, packets were handed out, but support or resources were not always readily available, and so it was harder for our learners to keep up with the material. The new group sessions allow everyone to complete one grammar lesson per day, ensuring that everyone is walking away with the same knowledge.



Our lunch hour is a particularly good time for Lakota language learning. Two fluent speakers on our staff pick a daily topic and engage in conversation, allowing the second-language learners an opportunity to listen and learn for 30 minutes. At the end, the speakers ask various questions to get the speakers engaged in conversation. After the “language lunch hour”, the speakers each sit with one learner at a time for 10 minute stretches. The fluent speakers then ask questions in order to engage the learners into conversation. The topic during these talks remains the same for the entire week to allow the learners time to prepare and study, and by the end of the week the conversation between fluent speaker and learner can fill the whole time allotted or more. This not only empowers the learners to see the progress made from the first day of the week to the last, but the fluent speakers enjoy seeing their first language being learned and utilized, and helping to make it happen.

In conjunction with our efforts to reach out to the community, we open the weekly parent lessons (discussed in the last section) not only to our whole staff, but to anyone who wants to attend. We also host an hour-long, Lakota-only Google Hangout for interested fluent speakers and learners, every evening except for Fridays and Saturdays. And we are starting a series of Lakota language weekends, similar to what we have hosted in the past, but with less of a focus on by-the-book language instruction and more emphasis on full immersion activities in the language.

# Elementary Immersion

When our program first started in 2012, the notion of having an immersion elementary school program for our daycare kids to graduate into seemed like a distant fantasy. It's still hard to believe that we're actually doing it! After a few years of planning and negotiation with the host institution – Red Cloud Indian School – we launched our elementary immersion program in late summer of last year. Knowing that we would need to develop the resources necessary to provide a high-quality, comprehensive education in Lakota, we spent the past year translating one full year of Kindergarten curriculum, creating an Lakota alphabet learning app, and completing a spelling and sight word app aimed at age-appropriate academic benchmarks. We purchased a Smartboard and

five iPads for our kindergarten classroom to augment the basic curriculum, and we use these on a daily basis.

Our Kindergarten immersion class is co-taught by a certified teacher with a high degree of second-language Lakota proficiency (Matt Rama) and a first-language fluent staff member (Gloria Warrior). We are so happy that our oldest cohort of daycare students was able to move up to Kindergarten while still being educated in a 100% Lakota environment! The program is located in the elementary school building on the Red Cloud campus, and the five students participate in lunch, recess and other school activities with their grade-level peers. In future years, the elementary immersion program will expand to subsequent

grade levels in order to follow this initial cohort in their education. (In other words, the current Kindergartners will be in first grade next year, and the oldest cohort of daycare kids will move up to Kindergarten.)

Our elementary immersion program is the first of its kind—a school-within-a-school using a full Lakota curriculum that is populated by students who have grown up with Lakota as one their first languages (vis-à-vis the daycare). The academic areas of primary focus include reading, writing, math, and language arts. The daily schedule also includes time for Lakota singing, cultural teachings, and physical education.

Our curriculum is as extensive and all-encompassing as that of the mainstream Kindergarten classroom. For example, as of this week, we are on unit 6, lesson 5 of our math curriculum, and have reached page 340 of our all-Lakota math curriculum/worksheet packet. The kids even do homework! In terms of reading, we have been working our way through translating the entire Reading A-Z ([www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)) series into Lakota, and have translated over 400 storybooks so far. We use these in the classroom on a daily basis, both to read to the children, and to teach them how to read on their own. These curricular materials, as well as our extensive (and growing) compendium of interactive Lakota apps, are not only invaluable for our program, but we will be able to share them with other Lakota immersion elementary schools that may start up in the future.



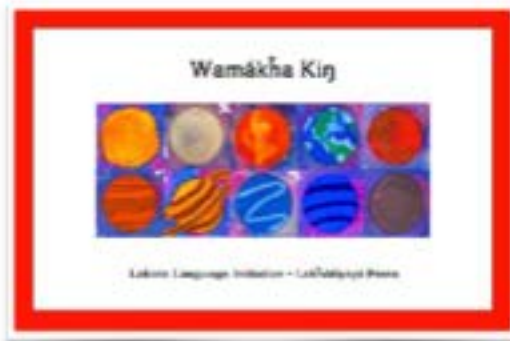
# Curriculum and Multimedia



Lakota Language Initiative continues to be at the forefront of developing and utilizing multimedia materials in indigenous language revitalization, including app development, educational video development, and eLearning for adult learners. We continue to develop comprehensive elementary curriculum in Lakota, and have successfully translated age-appropriate curriculum through first grade. Our Kindergarten and four years of preschool curriculum are utilized in immersion classrooms, where all age-appropriate academics are taught in Lakota.

LLI continues to house one of the largest collections of Lakota language materials. We have translated over 200 existing children's books and written over 35 original children books, which include topics like daily routines of getting dressed, the planets and stars, the five senses, and insects & arachnids. These materials are utilized in the immersion classroom and provide an abundance of reading materials for our emerging readers to develop literacy skills.

In addition, we have created nearly 100 educational videos and live action shorts, releasing the first in our series of "Brain Facts" video this month. These educational videos are key in providing access to Lakota language learning outside of direct classroom instruction. Our digital/online materials allow for children to engage in the language during downtime from instruction and at home, while also enabling community member who are not enrolled in our program to access high-quality language materials for their children. We have seen a huge increase in use of these materials, with over 55,000 views and 327 current YouTube channel subscribers. Multimedia development provides a unique opportunity for indigenous-led media creation and addresses challenges of accessibility, affordability and adaptability that we so often face when creating language revitalization materials.



# Youth Wellness Initiative



The Youth Wellness Program has grown significantly in the last year, and is successfully fulfilling all three main objectives of the program: to increase physical activity among Pine Ridge youth, strengthen our youth's culture identity using the Lakota language as a catalyst, and develop leadership skills among high school mentors. So far this year, high school mentors have facilitated and coached four youth sports camps (football, volleyball, basketball and cheerleading), four sports leagues (soccer, dance, basketball, and high school weightlifting program), and overseen

the organic garden project at Lakota Immersion Childcare. All activities are hosted and organized by high school youth mentors. A total of 448 youth have participated in the program, and 17 high school mentors are employed by the program.

High school mentors participate in weekly Lunch meetings, which center around core Lakota values and the Lakota life-way to address topics of goals and goal-setting, work ethic and resiliency. Mentors also talk about healthy relationships among peers and their identity as role models in their communities. This year's meetings have focused on the Lakota values of respect, generosity, courage, wisdom and perseverance, and how they apply to leadership and healthy life choices.

High school mentors implement what they learn in leadership meeting in the youth activities that they help host and organize. Lakota values and language are implemented in all instruction and mentors work with youth to understand healthy lifeways and their relationship to traditional Lakota values.



For the remainder of this school year, we will continue to hold basketball and dance teams, and will begin a track & field league at Red Cloud Indian School. Mentors have planned a variety of community events for Pine Ridge families that focus on increasing activity and healthy living. We also hope to address two challenge that this program has encountered by better measuring progress and data management, and increasing continuity among high school mentors throughout the school year.







# Housing & Homeownership

## 2017 Initiative Report



**TVCDC's Housing & Homeownership Initiative is committed to helping families build a better future through providing financial independence education, housing opportunities and homeownership pathways, all while providing one-on-one guidance and support. Additionally, the Initiative partners with other local organizations to help families find which housing, homeownership and financial independence pathways best suit their needs.**

There is a reported shortage of roughly 4,000 homes on The Pine Ridge Reservation. With 50% of our population under the age of 18, the need for housing, while already immense, will only increase. There are also a large number of individuals who live off-reservation, but commute to Pine Ridge for work each day. This means there is potential for a population increase to act congruently with an increase in available housing.

This year, the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation's Housing & Homeownership Initiative proactively addressed the need for housing by preparing five families for seven newly constructed single-family homes. Through extensive outreach and the provision of financial literacy courses, credit coaching, one-on-one financial education sessions, and homebuyer education our Housing & Homeownership Initiative is preparing the community for homeownership and a healthy financial future. Next year, they will ready 14 homeowners and 12 rental tenants for a successful move into their new homes.

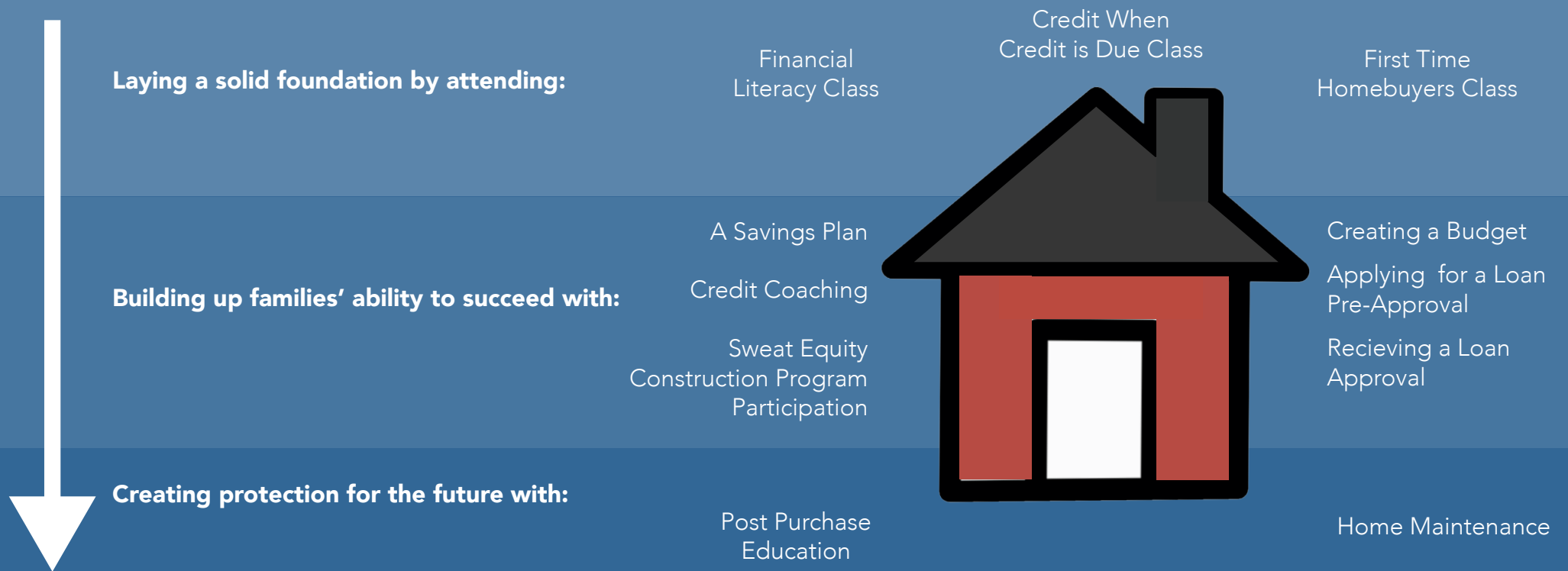
**Alan Jealous**

*First Time Homeowner & Self-Help Program Participant*



Alan, 24, is one of the owners of our new Single-Family Homes. Homeownership is possible for this low income buyer because of the Self-Help Program, which allowed him to complete hours of construction on his home to buy down the actual cost. Self Help housing is just as it sounds: families working together, pooling their labor to achieve homes of their own. Self Help is a method of home construction in which the borrower helps in the building process in a meaningful way. Sometimes, this is the only way low income borrowers are able to afford homeownership.

# How we help families prepare for homeownership:



**Every family's story is different**, which is why our homeownership staff is dedicated to **providing families with one-on-one support** throughout their entire homeownership journey. This year, our 5 current homeowners each had a different set of obstacles, goals and circumstances defining their pathway to homeownership. Out of five homeowners three of them are apart of the self-help program.

For example, when Alan initially applied for homeownership, a high-interest car loan was holding him back. However, after **working with our staff & our local partner, Lakota Federal Credit Union**, he was able to refinance his car loan to a **lower interest rate** and move on to the next steps in his homeownership journey.

Rose didn't have any refinancing to do, but needed to be able to have enough for her downpayment and closing costs. Through an **Individual Development Account (IDA) through our partners at Lakota Funds**, which give her a 2-1 match, she was able to reach her goal and officially become a homeowner.

Angel spent months considering which homeownership option best suited her needs, before finally confirming her choice to the **Self-Help Program**.

Shayne realized that, instead of writing a rent check each month, he could pay a mortgage that would allow him to build his **assets and equity**, and provide him with a long term **place to call home**.

Charmaine was already credit ready and will be utilizing a HUD 184 loan. The HUD 184 loan is for Native American Tribal members to get access to mortgage financing.



**60**  
New Intakes  
to Homeownership  
Applications



**112**  
Participants  
Attended Class



**738**  
Hours of  
Financial  
Coaching



**392**  
Construction  
Volunteer  
Hours



**17**  
TVCDC  
Employees  
Volunteering



**892**  
Hours of  
Sweat Equity  
Completed



**7**  
Single Family  
Homes  
Constructed





SHOP Sustainable Homeownership Project



SHOP is a collaboration between organizations on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation that have come together to create a more efficient process towards homeownership. The mission of the collaborative is to: empower families on the Pine Ridge Reservation through a streamlined homeownership system that stimulates asset building, economic development, and community wealth.

**In addition to celebrating move-in day for our first homeowners this coming year, our Housing & Homeownership Initiative will continue to create opportunities, provide education and strengthen partnerships in order to make homeownership more accessible on Pine Ridge.**



For more information on our Housing & Homeownership Initiative contact Ana Catches or Star Means



# Regenerative Community Development 2017 Initiative Report



**Thunder Valley CDC's Regenerative Community Development initiative embodies our approach to creative placemaking. By integrating the desires and values expressed by our community with innovative, culturally relevant and sustainable architecture and planning, we're creating an ecosystem of opportunity that promotes systemic change. This initiative provides the planning, design, and construction management functions for the design projects across all TVCDC development activities, ensuring that there is cohesion throughout every development phase of our 34-acre Regenerative Community.**

The Regenerative Community Development Initiative is centrally involved in the creation and conservation of a vibrant, healthy, sustainable community. But what makes community development "regenerative"? To understand the reason for our decision to use this specific language, it is important to understand the general situation on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Thunder Valley CDC is located in one of the poorest and most remote areas in the continental United States. There are no zoning, no codes, little available skilled labor, scarce insurance and heightened costs. As a result, very few funders willing to take the risk of committing to development projects, are large or small. The housing and many community structures on the reservation reflect these challenges. Additionally, Thunder Valley CDC aims not just to develop, but to do so sustainably, in a way that supports our triple bottom line of people, planet and prosperity.

We are focused on the creation of a community that meets and then overcomes the challenges of our region. The Regenerative Community Development Initiative is key to constructing and maintaining the physical infrastructure that makes a sustainable, healthy, and vibrant community possible. The Initiative helps develop the capacity of local contractors and trains skilled laborers and field leaders in sustainable construction. It designs and builds structures that are better than the existing norm and doesn't let contractors cut the "usual" corners. It creates spaces that are community-centered and include culturally-appropriate design and aesthetics. And it has pioneered funding mechanisms on the Reservation, opening the door for more native organizations to make use of these types of funding to improve their communities.

This year, the Regenerative Community Development Initiative has guided the success of number of accomplishments. The Initiative has worked with Workforce Development, Social Enterprise, and Food Sovereignty to plan, design and construct multiple projects that support each of these initiatives. The RCD Initiative has conducted extensive community engagement and worked with designers, engineers, contractors and funders to begin raising our built community from the ground. Our two biggest construction projects to date broke ground in November and will see occupancy this year!





**This year the Regenerative Community Development initiative:**

- Continued construction on Phase I of the Regenerative Community infrastructure
- Nearing completion of 7 net-zero energy usage single family homes
- Broke Ground on the Community Building and Bunk House
- Made extensive progress on completing pre-designs and on creating and reworking designs
- Created design guidelines in order to create continuity across future architects and planners hired for design projects in the Regenerative Community
- Held trainings for local artists and community members
- Hosted the annual reservation-wide middle school cross country meet on our property
- Started monthly summer open houses to give community members tours of our houses and agriculture facilities, including a 4-season greenhouse, large organic garden, and 450-chicken egg laying house.

TVCDC Recognizes artists as the culture bearers of our Lakota culture. If we plan to build a community development centered on Lakota values, spirituality and aesthetics, it is necessary for us to involve local artists in the planning and engagement process. TVCDC formed an official Artist Advisory Council consisting of 10 local Lakota artists in January, 2016. Our artists have driven the design of our community center, public park and artist live/work/gallery spaces. They have already developed two pieces of large scale public art and are developing a third piece for 2018.



“Each building we incorporate our art in is unique, and tells a story of who we are as a people and the importance of our culture. I feel proud every time I look out and see that I made a contribution with my art in some way. The opportunity of expressing myself through my art in this way, is such a wonderful, fulfilling feeling!”

- Mary Jo LeBeau



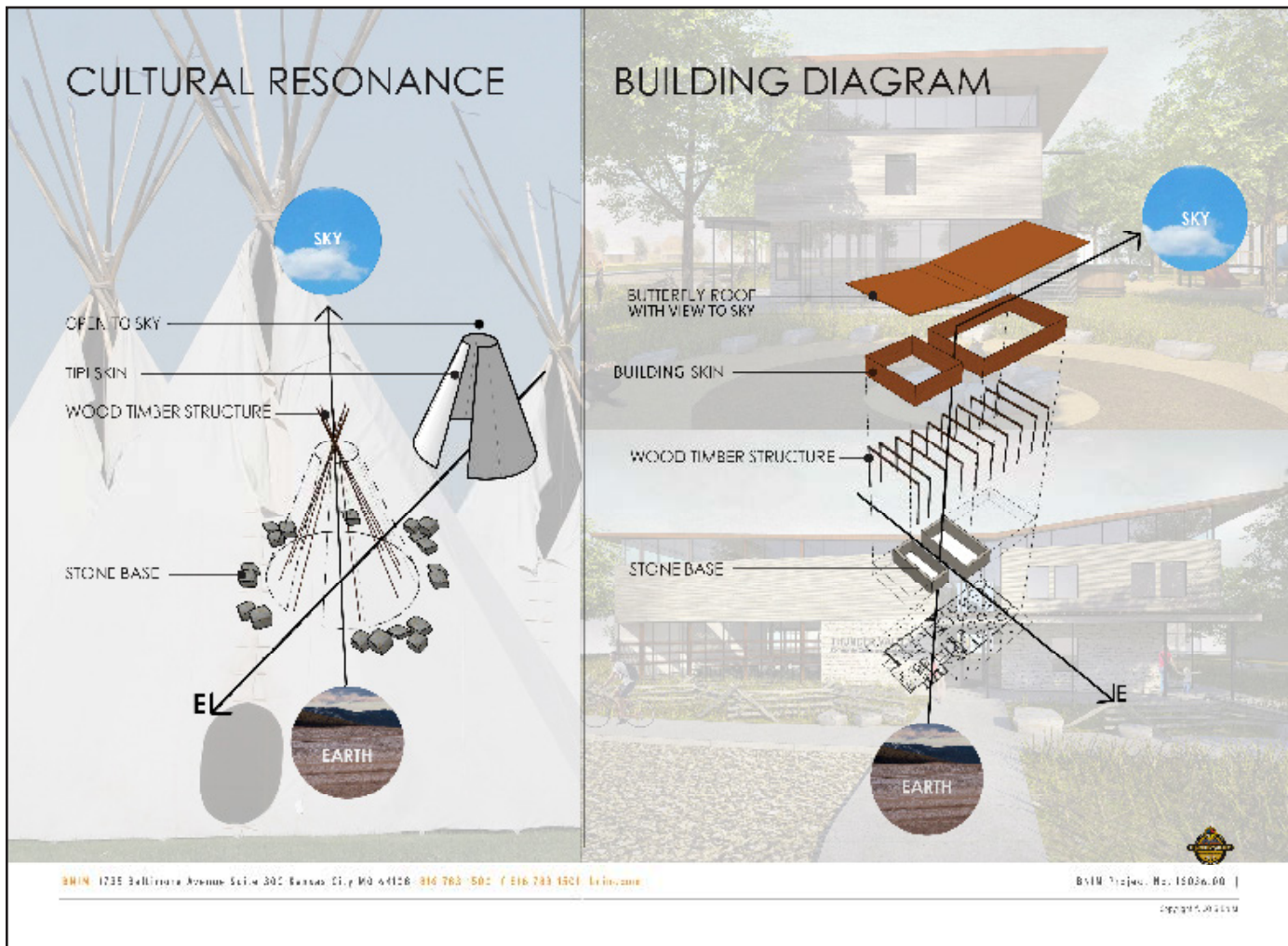
Phase 1 of the planned regenerative community incorporates the construction of 24 homes, 12 rental apartments and nearly 50,000 square feet of retail, office and community service space that will catalyze personal success and boost the local economy.

The program for phase 1 came directly from the requests of the community. Years of engagement shaped the homes and public space where people will spend time with family and friends. Public input helped our architects craft spaces that matched Lakota values in their use and aesthetic. The additions of amenities such as a healthy grocery store, an EMS building, a highly programmed public park and a nursery school will promote a healthy, creative, safe and active community rooted in Lakota culture at the heart of the Pine Ridge Reservation.





Engaging local community members, particularly artists, has been a vital part of Thunder Valley CDC's (TVCDC) regenerative plan. Our local people are experts at understanding the community and how the development can aid prosperity. They are familiar with the needs of this community and the solutions that will best meet those needs. They know the landscape, the environment and culture that exists here. The inclusion of our people's voice in the design of this development will transform it into a community that is truly rooted in our culture.



The Artist Advisory Council and several of our community members worked together to determine what makes a piece of architecture "Lakota?" We analyzed traditional structures and deconstructed elements that could be applied to a modern structure. The artists and community members cited the stone rings that exist at the bottoms of the traditional tipi. We talked about the act of wrapping a material around structure and the tectonic form of traditional structures that exposed how the wood elements were put together. We talked about the traditional practice of East openings as well as the importance connection with sky. We spoke about materiality and specific woods and plants that have cultural meaning. We gave these criteria back to the Architects and the new design they returned was immediately recognized by the community as "feeling" Lakota.



**13**

**Community Meetings**

**108**

**Solar Panels installed**

**15**

**People trained for solar panel installation**

**4**

**People trained to design solar array systems**

**12**

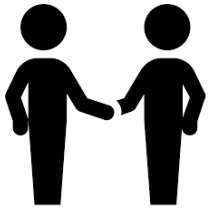
**Lakota Artists engaged in design**

**\$9,481,829**

**Construction dollars raised**

**18,720**

**Square Feet constructed**



**The primary goal of the Regenerative Community Development Program is to work with the community, artists, architects, engineers, contractors and sustainable energy experts to design and build a regenerative community that honors Lakota culture, spirituality and history.**

**Through tireless dedication, support from our partners and the use of innovative approaches, we are slowly creating our new reality. While we are still learning best practices and streamlining our processes, we are happy to have successfully designed and funded 25 new, sustainable, culturally appropriate buildings. These buildings will offer 33 homes, 2,500 square feet of agricultural education buildings, 5,000 square feet of interior community space and exterior amenities such as playgrounds and basketball courts for our people.**

**The next phase of the planned regenerative community is set to be complete by the end of 2020. This phase will include 50,000 square feet of retail, office and community service space that will catalyze personal success and boost local economy. The additions of amenities such as a healthy grocery store, an Emergency Medical Services building and a nursery school will promote a healthy, creative, safe and active community rooted in Lakota culture at the heart of the Pine Ridge Reservation.**





# Workforce Development Through Sustainable Construction

## 2017 Initiative Report



Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation's 10-month Workforce Development Program is an opportunity for Oglala Lakota youth ages 18-26 to gain knowledge in sustainable construction while also continuing their education. Now in its 3rd year, the program serves 10-15 young people in each cohort, offering intensive case management services and on-site, hands-on instruction in building trades. Participants receive a biweekly stipend in addition to their multifaceted trainings.



**Marie Kills Warrior Assistant Construction Trainer & former Workforce Development Program Participant**



**"I was lost before I came here** — doing odd jobs just to live, to get by. This is more stable financially. This year, I accomplished being a better person. **I look forward to coming to work**, being with my coworkers, and **being a part of this positive change** here on our reservation. **I love my job.**"

During the first three cohorts the program has served over 3 dozen young people who have completed numerous projects, including a solar paneled outdoor classroom, poultry house, and a pole barn with office spaces. They also nearly finished with our first 7 single family homes. Participants have learned that energy efficiency isn't just about coping with climate change but that it also a more viable economic strategy for creating long term community wealth.



# Our Model

There are four building blocks to the program:

## Construction Theory & Practice

On the job training prepares participants for employment in construction fields. Participants receive classroom training on essential skills like construction safety, and work alongside local experts in the field with over 40 years of combined experience.

## Continuing Education

All participants are required to advance beyond their current level of education upon entering the program. Whether completing their GED or taking college courses, students have daily hours dedicated to education & financial support available for specific needs.

## Social-Emotional Development

A nurturing work environment with 160 hours of programming focused on healthy coping mechanisms, stress management, emotional relief, & mind/body awareness. Culture & spirituality help build participants' capacity for handling stress & healing from trauma.

## Soft Skills Development

To set them up for success, participants are required to complete a nationally recognized, Native specific job-readiness curriculum. They also create resumes & learn to manage their income by completing classes focused on financial literacy, credit scores, & budgeting.



## A program that:

Recognizes participants as whole people.

Builds their individual capacity.

Builds their capacity as contributing members of the the wider community.

Sets up participants for greater long term success in whichever field they pursue.

Increases local access to skilled workers.

Helps create healthy individuals who can create healthy home lives.

# 1-11 MONTHS



Months  
1 - 2

**Workin' with Traditions**  
Nationally recognized, Native based job readiness training.

**Native H.O.P.E.**  
Strengths-based training that incorporates culture, spirituality, humor.

**Financial Independence**  
Financial education surrounding budgeting, credit management, and savings habits.

**Goal Setting**  
Individual Success Plans & Individual Education Plans establish short-term & long-term goals.

Month  
3

**Workplace Safety**  
Essential safety courses teach responsibility on-site & proper procedure as a crew member.

**First Aid Training**  
Courses in first aid help participants be prepared.

Months  
4-10

**Equine Therapy**  
Participants learn to build trust in themselves and the horse they are partnered with through interaction.

**Home Construction**  
As part of their construction education, participants get hands-on learning experience by helping build the Single Family Homes in our Regenerative Community.

**Additional Safety Training**  
OSHA 10/30 training continues participant knowledge of on-site expectations.

**Community Service**  
Local building projects in the community creates wider local impact while skill building.

**Personal Awareness**  
Trauma sensitive yoga training & talk therapy help participants understand their mind & body relationship, ways to cope with stress, and how to create healthy habits.

**Job Placement**  
Resume building & job searching help participants transition to their next opportunity.





**780**  
SIPs Home  
Panels Installed



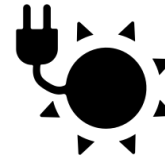
**98**  
Windows  
Installed



**173**  
Yards of Concrete  
Poured



**10,000**  
Sq Ft of Living  
Space Built



**86**  
Solar Panels  
Installed



**90**  
Daily minutes of  
continued education



**160**  
Hours of social  
emotional training

***Tre Vocu Workforce Development Program Participant***



“I joined the program because carpentry is not a well-known trade on the rez and because I’m always trying to learn new things. I’ve **learned quite a bit** — reading a tape, how to use a saw. There’s always more to it than you think. We’ve done different trainings, like lifestyle skills. **It shows you who you are** to yourself, opens your eyes up to new things. **If you want to learn, this is the best place to start.**”

Our Workforce Development Program has grown immensely, with over 70 applicants to this year’s cohort. Every year we see greater success with program retention, participant satisfaction, and partnerships for job placement & higher education. We have seen the young women and men in this program become empowered to take charge of their futures, create career pathways, and learn how they can be a part of long-term change in our communities.



For more information on our Workforce Development Program, contact Matthew Kull at 605-455-2700 or [Matt@thundervalley.org](mailto:Matt@thundervalley.org). You can also find more information on our website, [www.thundervalley.org](http://www.thundervalley.org)



# Food Sovereignty Initiative

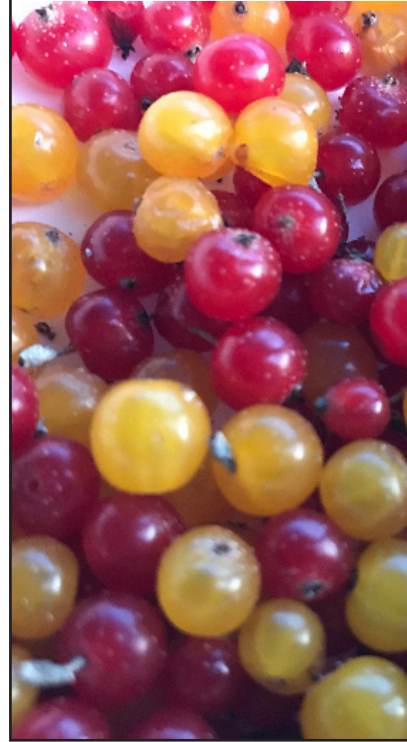
## 2017 Initiative Report



Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation's Food Sovereignty Initiative is a multifaceted set of programs and partnerships working together to create a sustainable and viable food system on the Pine Ridge Reservation. It has been a momentous year for the Initiative, and we are eager to share everything we have accomplished. In the past year we've expanded our agricultural facilities, resources, and community knowledge, increasing our capacity for creating lasting change.



### Traditional Foods, Contemporary Uses: Chokecherry Jelly Class



Although a traditional food, chokecherries are also widely used today, growing in dark bunches along waterways. Over the summer we had a chokecherry jelly-making workshop. Many of the older women shared stories about growing up when self-sustaining habits, like harvesting or growing your own food, were the norm. One woman talked about her grandparents loading up all the grandkids in a wagon to go down by the creek and pick berries. Sharing stories like these is an important part of our work, since our tribal knowledge guides us and reminds us of where we come from — it informs our vision for the future of our Food Sovereignty Initiative.









For us, **Food Sovereignty** is about creating a food system that is:

- Healthy
- Culturally relevant
- Ecologically sound
- Sustainable
- Defined by local needs
- Accessible
- Creating Self-Sufficiency
- Connecting people to their food sources
- Affordable





This year the Initiative expanded several programs and started new ones too. Some of our greatest accomplishments for this year include:

-  Construction of a geothermal greenhouse
-  Management of two large gardens
-  Numerous community education events
-  Construction of a large poultry house
-  Arrival of over 500 chicks
-  Planting an orchard of traditional fruit trees
-  Coordinating Pine Ridge's Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition
-  Completion of a locally-based food sovereignty curriculum



### A New Home: 500+ Chicks Join the TVCDC Team



Live chicks for our Demonstration Farm were expected to arrive one Friday afternoon, but the truck they were supposed to be on left without them! It was critical to their survival to get them to the warmth of the brooders set up in their new home, so Food Sovereignty Initiative staff drove 150 miles to get the chicks. Despite arriving at 10 pm, the chicks were safely unloaded, fed, watered, and ready to begin their new life as part of our Regenerative Farm. They continue to grow, run, and play, and soon they will be laying dozens of eggs each day.



**Here's some of this year's biggest steps forward in growing that future:**

### **Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition**

The Food Sovereignty Coalition has 5 active members of community partner organizations that are working together to create a local food system. This coalition was able to get buffalo meat into the 9 Head Start Centers across the reservation. We also held an annual garden tour to teach our members about different garden systems we're all using.



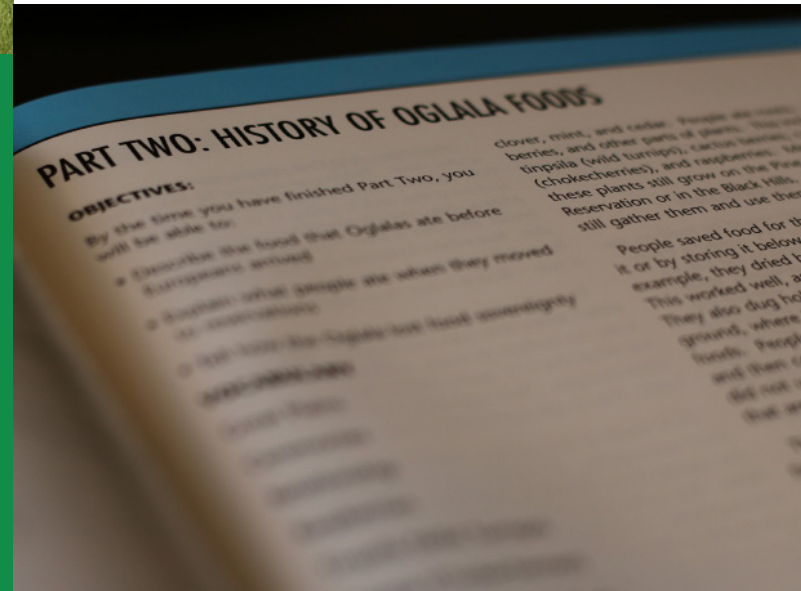
**"The Coalition's long term goal is local food sovereignty through passing on knowledge to the next generations."**

- Leslie Rae Henry, Oglala Lakota College Ag. Extension



### **Food Sovereignty Curriculum**

This educational guide was completed this spring and will be featured in local classrooms during the 2017-2018 school year! Geared toward older elementary students, this guide is full of information, activities, graphics, and review exercises to help students engage in hands-on learning. Topics include Oglala food histories, current local foods, nutrition, gardening, safe food handling, and food preservation.



## Community Classes

Bringing people together to learn useful skills such as organic gardening, canning, tree planting, and a buffalo kill, have been major highlights from our community classes. We held over 20 workshops and had 120 participants in total, who shared meals, created healing salves, learned recipes, and exchanged ideas and laughter.



***“The classes allowed us to gather as a community to learn more about the traditional plants, medicines and foods all our relatives who came before us took care of and depended on.”***

- Lisa Iron Cloud, Class participant



## Regenerative Demonstration Farm

The demonstration farm is up and running and includes the Poultry Unit, Paddock System, and Community Gardens. Jokingly called the “chicken palace”, the poultry unit is now fully constructed and the 500+ chickens moved in. The Poultry Palace also has a beautiful solarium art wall, designed by our Artist Advisory Board. In the paddock system we planted over 500 traditional fruit trees including chokecherry, buffalo berry, and wild plum. As a result of our community gardens we gave fresh produce to over 50 families and held our first Farmer’s Market.



## Reconnecting to our Food Source: Poultry Processing



Around 20 local youth participated in our Summer Youth Leadership Development Program this year. Participants learned to butcher chickens in a safe and healthy manner. With 32 chickens processed all students had the opportunity to properly learn how to humanely process & store them.



## BY THE NUMBERS: HOW WE INCREASED FOOD SOVEREIGNTY THIS YEAR



**1530 ft<sup>2</sup>**  
Geothermal  
Greenhouse



**560**  
Rhode Island  
Red Chickens



**1500 ft<sup>2</sup>**  
Poultry & Egg  
facility



**18,769 ft<sup>2</sup>**  
Organic Garden  
Space



**500**  
Food Curriculums  
Printed



**43+**  
Tours &  
Trainings



**530**  
Traditional Fruit  
Trees Planted

Our Food Sovereignty Initiative has rapidly expanded in the last year and is only going to continue to grow. We know there is an urgent need for healthy, accessible foods that nourish our people. As part of our commitment to creating a local food system here on Pine Ridge, we are dedicated to learning from others as well as sharing our story. Our staff presented on the Duck Valley Reservation & the Healthy Kids Healthy Futures conference this year, and also learned a lot of useful information that will help our next year be a success.



For more information on our Food Sovereignty Initiative, contact Nick Hernandez at 605-455-2700 or [nhernandez@thundervalley.org](mailto:nhernandez@thundervalley.org). You can also find more information on our website, [www.thundervalley.org](http://www.thundervalley.org).

