

Program Summary for Lakota Youth Homestay

***“Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children”
Sitting Bull***

Mission Statement: To build sustainable relationships and engage in cultural exchange between Native American youth and non-natives through participation in an enriched homestay program

Vision Statement:

- Recognize that we are all people of faith who are here to love and care for one another through our words and actions
- Connect our faith and call to social justice with our ministry to Pine Ridge by starting and supporting an intercultural homestay program
- Provide Native youth and non-natives with an opportunity to share conversation, experiences and develop friendships
- Provide Native youth with opportunities to explore the world beyond the reservation, develop new hobbies/interests and a love of discovery
- Help Native youth link current/nascent interests with future skill and knowledge development that will enable them to live successfully on the reservation and contribute to improving life for their tribe
- Provide local hosts with an opportunity to open their hearts and homes and engage in learning about Native American culture, history and language
- Provide local youth with an opportunity to experience and learn about Native American history, culture and way of life on/off the reservation

Organizational Values:

- Trust
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Respect for all cultures/faiths
- Community
- Generosity
- Making a difference
- Enthusiasm

History of Sanctuary/CCWM Relationship with Pine Ridge: Sanctuary/CCWM UCC members and friends have participated in annual volunteer trips to the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota since 2012. Volunteers work with ReMember, a non-profit organization founded by a UCC minister and based on Pine Ridge, as well as other reservation-based organizations on building and community projects for the benefit of tribal members. Over the years, Sanctuary members have been honored to meet and develop relationships with people on Pine Ridge and visit a land of striking beauty with a vibrant indigenous culture. As we learned about the rich history of the Lakota people, the volunteers were deeply moved by the experience and returned to Medford as changed people determined to do more to stand in solidarity with the people on the reservation.

The people of Pine Ridge are strong, proud and resilient in the face of centuries of genocide, oppression and discrimination which, over time, led to deep-rooted challenges including high rates of poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, disease and teen suicide. Young people on the reservation, in particular, face many challenges as a result of historical trauma, extreme poverty, and racism which can lead to feelings of hopelessness, depression and substance abuse. In 2015 alone, there have been at least 17 suicides of young people ranging in age from 12 to 19 year olds with many more attempted suicides. Many young people have limited opportunities to explore possibilities and options for themselves on or off the reservation.

The youth stay program, with the guidance of an Advisory Committee, will be designed to develop authentic relationships between the young people on Pine Ridge and our local community. The youth stay program has the potential to open up a world of possibilities for young people by providing an opportunity to explore interests they may not have access to in their local community. The goal of this program is to ignite a spark of hope in Lakota youth that will motivate them to continue learning, to live and to grow into their full potential. We hope this experience will enable them to envision a future for themselves living creatively and productively on the Pine Ridge reservation through pursuit of their interests and development of skills and knowledge that will help to improve conditions for the tribe over time. For hosts in our own community, this program can provide an educational opportunity to learn about the history, culture and current lives of Native Americans and develop friendships with Lakota youth.

Current Conditions on the Reservation:

Pine Ridge today is the 7th largest reservation in the U.S. It is also the 2nd poorest county in the country. Life on Pine Ridge continues to be extremely difficult for many people. Pine Ridge is about two thirds the size of CT and the population is approximately 35,000 with 35% under the age of 18. Some other statistics (from federal, state and tribal sources):

- Annual per capita income - \$7,000
- Unemployment – 90%
- Alcoholism – 80%
- 97% live below the federal poverty level
- Life expectancy is 48 years for men; 52 years for woman
- Teen suicide rate is 2.5 times higher than the US national average
- School drop-out rate is 70%
- 35% of the household on Pine ridge have no indoor plumbing; 39% have no electricity
- 60% of the households are infested with toxic black mold
- An average of 17 people live in each family home which is usually FEMA style trailer
- Most people have limited access to quality health care
- There are minimal preventative health care programs
- There is one grocery store; there are no major stores on the reservation
- Limited public transportation; very few own operating cars

Strengths/Assets of the Youthstay Ministry:

- connection to Sanctuary's stated shared values and Bold New Model for Ministry including "seeking and building partnerships across the City and the World"
- connection to Sanctuary's mission "to care for and meet people where they are" and "action-oriented followers of Jesus"
- connection to Sanctuary's vision to "advocate for justice and make a difference in the lives of people in need"
- respect for all faiths and spiritual paths
- sharing our gifts (spiritual, material, personal) with each other
- passion for raising awareness and understanding of Native American issues with non-natives
- desire to nurture and develop a deeper, broader and long -lasting commitment to the people of Pine Ridge
- support of many Sanctuary members who have been to Pine Ridge
- support of Lakota adults on the reservation
- opportunity to engage the local community in a new Sanctuary program
- familiarity with Pine Ridge through annual volunteer trips

Supporters of the YouthStay Idea as of November 15, 2015.

- * Theresa Two Bulls, former President of Oglala Sioux Nation and So. Dakota State Senator, Attorney and current Patient Advocate at Pine Ridge Hospital
- * Yvonne "Tiny" DeCory, Outreach Coordinator for Sweet Grass Suicide Prevention Project and Director of B.E.A.R program, Pine Ridge, SD
- * Ted Skantze, Executive Director at ReMember, Pine Ridge, SD
- * Paula Sibal, Trip Coordinator at ReMember, Pine Ridge, SD
- * Lisa Iron Cloud, Organizer of Lakota Sewing Circle, Rapid City, SD
- * Arlo Iron Cloud, KILI Radio, Pine Ridge, SD
- * Tosa Two Heart, member of Oglala Sioux tribe
- * Shannon Freed, Director at Earth Tipi, Manderson, SD
- * Sharice Davids, Deputy Director at Thunder Valley, Attorney, Owner of Hoka Coffee, Pine Ridge, SD
- * Jessie Baird, Wampanoag Vice-Chairwoman, MIT Linguist, Mashpee, MA
- * Clayton Steele, Oglala Sioux tribal member and staff member at ReMember
- * Susan Malone, Middle School teacher, Porcupine, SD
- * Nikki Koernetze, Elementary School teacher, Porcupine, SD
- * Matt Hern, former Director at Purple Thistle Youth center, Vancouver, BC and Co-Founder of Vancouver, BC/Fort Good Hope, NWT Youth Exchange Program
- * Michael Behrendt, City Planner, Durham, NH
- * Tom and Donna Lincoln, Medford, MA
- * Roxane Pratten, Medford, MA
- * Nancy Lowenstein, OT Professor at Boston University, Lexington, MA
- * Kathy Williams, Sanctuary UCC member
- * Ose Manheim, Sanctuary UCC member
- * Elizabeth Bennett, Sanctuary UCC member
- * Deb DiSciullo, Sanctuary UCC member

Organizational Structure:

The model for this program is based on the Fresh Air Fund (www.freshair.org) which has operated a youth homestay program for NYC low-income teens for over 100 years. We considered different possible structures for the Native youth stay program including a 501(c)3 connected to and under the auspices of Sanctuary, a completely separate 501(c)3 as well as establishment of a new Sanctuary program. After assessing the advantages and disadvantages of these various options, it was determined that a youth stay program is aligned with Sanctuary's mission/vision and would best be proposed to the congregation as a new Sanctuary program.

An Advisory committee would be established consisting of 6 to 8 members with at least three Native members. The Advisory committee function is to guide the development of the program in a culturally sensitive and honorable way to facilitate trust, understanding and respect. Sanctuary would provide administrative support (approximately 1 hour/week for the first year) to start up the program with adjustments in administrative hours after the first year. Volunteers would be sought from Sanctuary, host families and the local community for fundraising activities, planning and community outreach.

Program/Services/Products: This program would offer free one week homestay experiences to Native American youth, ages 10 – 15 years old, from the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota and engagement in a variety of meaningful activities in the greater Boston area.

Local hosts – either families or individuals – would be recruited via word of mouth, informational get-togethers, community outreach and fundraisers. Hosts would welcome 1 or 2 teens into their homes and lives for a week. Hosts would apply via a website and would undergo national background/criminal checks, home visits and legal agreements prior to acceptance as a host. Criteria for hosts would be enthusiasm for sharing their homes/lives with a young person, an interest in learning about Native Americans and a willingness to engage in a cultural exchange. Hosts would be required to participate in a series of informational meetings designed to broaden their understanding of Native American history/Lakota culture and would be facilitated by people familiar with Pine Ridge. Hosts would complete an interest checklist outlining their ideas for activities/events for the week.

Supporters on Pine Ridge would promote the program through their community network, youth programs, teachers, etc. For the first year, Lakota supporters of the program would identify and vet prospective teens and their families. Criteria for teens would be emotional stability, interest and comfort in exploring off the reservation; medical insurance (Medicaid or private) written permission from legal guardian and 2 letters of reference from non-family members. Teens would also complete an interest checklist. The interest checklist from hosts

and teens would be reviewed and matches made based on age, gender, interests. For the few years, 1 - 2 Lakota adults would travel with the youth group and would be housed with at least 1 Lakota teen with a host.

Group and individual activities would be planned throughout the week based on the interests of the teens and hosts. A high priority would be given to participation in indigenous activities in the greater Boston/New England area such as visits to local wacipis (pow wows), day trips to Tomaquag Museum (www.tomaquagmuseum.org) or Mt Kearsarge (www.indianmuseum.org) Indian museum and get-togethers with Wampanoag and/or Narragansett youth. Additional activities could be a day trip to the beach, whale watching, ice cream making, swimming, canoeing, hiking, the aquarium, hawk watching, art/craft classes, beading, biking, music, concerts, BBQs, etc. There would be scheduled times throughout the week for the teens to process their thoughts and feelings with a facilitator (Lakota adult and a local volunteer familiar with Pine Ridge).

The first year, 2016, would be spent building relationships with Lakota and local advisors and developing the program together. In 2017, the program would start small – perhaps 5 - 6 youth with one Lakota adult for a one week stay in the summer. After the youth stay, both teens and hosts would complete a post-trip survey and youth would meet at least once upon return to reservation for reflection and conversation. This could be facilitated on the reservation by Lakota advisory committee members or their designees. The results of the survey would be reviewed by the Advisory Committee and Program Director and used to improve the program for the following year. In 2018, two groups of teens could possibly come – one in July, one in August – for a one week stay or the program could be expanded to a 2 week stay. In 2019, the Lakota youth stay program would continue with the possibility of an additional exchange with youth from the greater Medford community going out to ReMember/Pine Ridge for a one week stay on the reservation.

**“Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase.
Just take the first step” - MLK**

Tentative Program Timeframe:

- January - March 2016 – identify, invite and meet with local advisory members; design youth stay Web page, write content, develop forms, FAQs, etc.
- March - April, 2016 – identify, invite and meet with Lakota Advisory members on Pine Ridge
- May – July, 2106 - review/edit/finalize web page content, forms etc. by Advisory Committee

- August, 2016 - Meet with Lakota advisors on Pine Ridge
- September - December, 2016 - introduce/promote program to hosts, recruit local hosts for 2017 homestay; introduce/promote program to Pine Ridge communities, meet with families and recruit Lakota youth for program
- January - March 2017 – identify group of 4 – 6 Lakota youth for 2017 homestay program; complete online applications; confirm medical coverage, etc
- March, 2017 - match up hosts and teens; send out host and teen profiles along with welcome letters with FAQs
- March - June, 2017 – letter/email exchange; Skype sessions between hosts and teens
- April - May, 2017– finalize youth stay and travel arrangements
- May – July, 2017 - finalize activities for the youth stay week; organize/purchase supplies; meet with Lakota teens on Pine Ridge
- Friday, July 22– Sat, July 30, 2017 (tentative) – FIRST YOUTHSTAY!

Marketing Plan:

- New web page linked to Sanctuary website with information about the program and applications for hosts in greater Medford area and for families on the reservation,
- Outreach to New England tribes – Wampanoag, Narragansett, etc.
- Lakota youth outreach via Lakota advisory members and local contacts through ReMember, reservation teachers, Earth Tipi, local contacts, etc.
- Outreach for hosts via web page, Sanctuary networks and person to person connections, articles in local paper, Lisa Wangness/Globe, Medford list serves, community events and meetings. Currently have several offers to host
- Bi-annual trips to the reservation to meet with Lakota advisors ,community groups (Thunder Valley, Sweet Grass, OL-CASA, schools, community groups, etc.) and Lakota teens participating in program
- Printed materials – program postcards, flyers, etc.
- Recruit volunteers to solicit in-kind donations such as airline tickets, art supplies, museum passes, bike rentals, etc.
- Community events such as cookouts, art show

Administrative/Management: Program would be overseen by Program Director with close, on-going collaboration with Advisory board. Sanctuary UCC would provide up to 1 hour/week of administrative assistance for the start-up of this program in 2016 and possibly 2 hours/week in 2017. Our intention is to develop and grow new volunteer leadership from within Sanctuary as well as the community as the program grows and expands.

- Web site maintenance – Sanctuary Administrative Assistant/Program Director
- Financial accountability – Bruce Roberts

Liability insurance/ Medical Coverage: Several discussions have taken place with George Hume, UCC insurance agent and the national UCC insurance board. As per the UCC insurance representative, the youth would be covered under Sanctuary's current UCC liability insurance of \$3m when engaged in church-sponsored group activities/events. Hosts would be required to have their own liability/homeowners insurance. The UCC insurance underwriter will respond in writing to specific insurance liability questions and will provide guaranteed written coverage.

- Lakota youth would be required to have South Dakota Medicaid or CHIP coverage; arrangements would need to be made for off reservation/out of state coverage under SD Medicaid.
- A rider to the existing Sanctuary insurance policy can be added through UCC for accident insurance with a cost of approximately \$500 - \$1200 depending on number of teens/length of stay.

Financial Plan:

2016: Anticipated overall budget of approximately \$6 - \$7k required to start up and build out the program through 2016. Please see budget for details.

2016 Initial start-up funding for the program would be through a variety of sources including:

- A straight budgetary request for 2016 from Sanctuary funds in the amount of \$1500
- A Sanctuary fundraising match request of \$2000 if \$2000 is fundraised in 2015-2016
- Fundraisers/donations/grants (anticipate \$2000)
- Host application fees (\$125 per host x 6 hosts = \$750)

2017: The cost of the program is anticipated to be \$13,000 with round trip airfares as the largest expense. Administrative time is anticipated to increase from 1 hour/week to 2 hours/week (\$1400/year to \$2800/year).

Anticipated 2017 Income Sources:

- Existing funds in Sanctuary Pine Ridge account (already earmarked for direct donations to programs/services that benefit the people of Pine Ridge) - \$2200
- fundraising events (cookie walk, online silent auction, house parties, raffles, gofundme campaign, direct donations, etc.) organized by Sanctuary UCC members, host families/individuals and community supporters (anticipate \$3000 – \$4,000)
- Straight budgetary request for 2017 from Sanctuary funds in the amount of \$3250
- Dollar for dollar Sanctuary fundraising match - \$3000 - \$4,000
- Direct donation offers of airfares (currently have 2 offers)
- in-kind donations of frequent flyer miles, etc.
- grants (Riverside Church Densford fund, Neighbors in Need, etc.)

“From the little spark may burst a mighty flame” – Dante

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