



Mission of Love



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

TO: Kathleen Price and the Mission of Love
FR: Debra White Plume, Manderson, SD
DT: 11 October 2011
RE: Wopila Tanka (A big thank you)

I am writing this letter of Wopila (thank you) for all of the support and assistance you have given to us in many different ways.

First of all, we are very thankful and appreciate the help and assistance you have given to us in continuing the construction of our Community House at Kiza Park. With all of the plumbing and electrical work, we are now in the modern times! No more outhouse and no more hauling water! The carpentry work in the kitchen is awesome, we now have cupboards, a door, and countertops along with the sink and other appliances, we have had several gatherings and events there, including birthday parties, meetings, a film forum, and planning sessions. With the extreme lack of facilities available having a Community House has already so greatly impacted our goals and dreams in a positive manner. I look forward to sharing more with you about this in the future. We have many events planned for the fall and winter, which can now be held for sure, as we have this building! No more "Location To Be Announced" section on our flyers and posters! With your help, we have moved further along in our construction and can now focus on getting resources to gravel the parking area, make porches, get a permanent floor covering, and maybe a small playground nearby, inside a fence we hope to construct before the snow flies! We are excited that now the youth led Lakota Media Project has a place to make documentary films for our people and our issues. We are working to raise more support for LMP to get video cameras, computers, etc to further that work along. Especially in the face of the exploitative 20/20 ABC Special by Diane Sawyer, although she probably meant well, I was seriously dissatisfied with the program. It gave incorrect statistics (80% of us are alcoholics!! No way is that true.) Anyway, with our Community House, the LMP now has a work space and will continue with their work as we go along doing our best to get them what they need. LMP can our voice to tell our own stories to the world, which is really needed as we continue our work to preserve our Lakota culture and to work with our allies to protect our water, land, and air from the extractive mining corporations who are lurking around us.

The assistance in preparing the trailer house to make it safe for the young parents with 5 children moves them closer to having a real home that will be warm in the winter and a safe dwelling with no more electrical problems! You all have no idea of how much this means to them and to the relatives who had taken turns hosting them, as it takes up to 5 years or longer to get a house to rent from the tribal housing program. They are working to get the rest of their windows replaced, and to purchase copper tubing for their propane tank so they will have a reliable heating source for the winter. Our need for houses seriously overwhelms the government housing program, which estimates 4,000 homes to meet the needs of families with no house of their own, who live with relatives or in such substandard homes, that in a city, would be acknowledged as condemned. You have truly impacted this young family in our community through your brief time here this past summer, and I know with more funding and resources you could do so much more, as you know the people here and what the real needs are! Even employed people can rarely get financing to purchase a home, with the federal Indian policies governing our every move in such a bureaucratic way that nothing ever gets done! No other



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people in America have more government rules than Indian tribes. We even have a Prisoner of War number that other Americans do not have to have. No other people are measured by their blood degree. These policies demean our identity and sometimes I think they are made in order to make us feel bad about being Lakota, but we rise above those feelings and are proud of our ancestry and who we are and who our generations will become! All these rules are Acts of Congress, so changing the rules takes decades, but we have changed some rules in my lifetime, including our children's right to speak our Lakota language (1978), and the de-criminalization of our spiritual way of life (1968).

The vehicle that you donated has already provided a way for us to do so much more as the travel distances between villages are so great on the Pine Ridge. Just to go check mail at the post office is a 10 mile round trip for us. To go do business in the Village is an 80 mile round trip. The nearest city to conduct business, shop for supplies and office needs is a 200 mile round trip from here. Now that we have access to a vehicle that runs well, has license and tags, and can be insured we know the coming seasons will be very productive, and we will be safe in the winter temperatures as we travel these distances.

There are many families here who have enjoyed the clothing, shoes, winter coats and other items needed by family members of all ages. The items you brought were useful, clean, and thoughtful. Often times the items sent here, although well-meant, are so old and used, we wonder why folks would even bother to give away such items! Especially the boots and jackets went out quickly to the young men in high school and the grade school boys who are a bit larger in size! With the lack of jobs here on the Rez, these are much appreciated items that are too costly for folks to purchase. There are 16,000 employable, but with only 4,000 jobs, that leaves 12,000 of us with no place to work. I went to a job interview a couple of years ago, there were 80 of us applying! So I know from personal experience, even having earned a few college degrees and with 25 years of work history, there is no guarantee that one can get a job!!

I look forward to doing more good work together to impact the lives of our people and spending time with the volunteer groups that come with you. I have rarely met volunteers who have such great respect and compassion for our situation, who understand what it is to help someone, as one never knows when one may be the person who has no where to turn, no office that can help, who just gets tired of "being on the list" to be able to rent a house or get a job. It is easy for our people to be happy, function well, and achieve the needs of the family, most times all folks need to *just get over that hump* is a little help and compassion from friends who do not make a judgment on "how those people should be". We so recognize in you a true friend, and ally!

I just wanted to write a quick little thank you letter, and let you know how much we all appreciate everything you, your friends, volunteers and supporters have done for us! Lila wopila iciciyape. I will close here, and wish the best for you all and send my best greetings to you and the Mission of Love! Toksa ake. (We will see each other again.)