



RE-MEMBER

Working with the Oglala Lakota Oyate, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, S.D.

Re-Member
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Re-Member is About Relationships

We believe that in addition to assisting the Oyate (people) of Pine Ridge with material goods, the strongest way to promote positive change on the Pine Ridge Reservation is to build relationships. Through this relationship-building, our volunteers become advocates to stand in solidarity with the Oglala Lakota.

Re-Member exists to recall our country's treatment of Indian people, and to repair pieces of that broken relationship. Guided by the aspirations of the Oglala Lakota communities we work with, Re-Member seeks to improve the quality of life through interaction, shared resources, and volunteer services.

A non-profit, non-evangelical mission, we host in excess of 1,000 volunteers annually at our quarters on Pine Ridge Reservation, in rural southwestern South Dakota. One of the poorest areas of the United States, the region is also home to the historically significant Wounded Knee mass grave, with the Black Hills less than 90 minutes away.

Our six-day program combines home repair projects with community outreach, cultural presenters and lectures, along with visits to the Badlands, the Wounded Knee Massacre site, and pow-wows, as available.

We believe that cultural exchange between the

Lakota Oyate and our volunteers is crucial in educating, engaging and empowering those with whom we work. Over time, our Lakota neighbors have become aware that there are people who care about the injustices that face them on a daily basis.

We seek to heal the wounds of the past, to "Re-Member," by putting back together that which is broken, and build hope for the future.



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About Us: Our Program

- Re-Member offers a 6 day, 6 night immersion program from our permanent site on the Pine Ridge Reservation in south-western South Dakota. Our program commences on Saturday, and concludes on Friday.
- Trips fees are all inclusive, excluding transportation to-and-from Re-Member and incidental purchases during your stay (souvenirs, snacks, etc.)
- Our facility features a fully-equipped workshop, dorm-style accommodations, a lecture hall and a full-service kitchen and dining area. All meals during the program week are furnished, sometimes featuring traditional Lakota cuisine.
- As available, we schedule visits to the Wounded Knee mass grave site, Badlands National Park, powwows or other cultural activities throughout the week.
- Our community outreach and home repair worksites are spread across the reservation, each project is coordinated by a trained construction supervisor or Program Manager.



From Humble Beginnings, *Re-Member* Grew “Building The Dream”

Re-Member began as a partnership in the fall of 1997 when **Keith Titus**, then a pastor in West Olive, MI and **Mike Alles**, of Grand Haven, MI, teamed up to start an outreach organization. Shortly thereafter both were apprised of the grim circumstances on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, and in May 1998, Keith and Mike made their first trip, accompanied by Rev. Virginia Titus, Keith's wife and co-pastor. Following a bad Michigan storm, they decided to deliver fire wood to Pine Ridge. As a result of that trip, it was decided that they would focus their efforts on the Oglala Lakota people of Pine Ridge and in June 1998, Re-Member began as a non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation.

From that small beginning, Re-Member

now brings more than 1000 volunteers to Pine Ridge each year, performing basic home repairs, helping the elders and disabled, and affording volunteers an immersion experience in Lakota culture. Our facilities include a fully-equipped workshop, a commercial kitchen, and dorm-style accommodations capable of hosting up to 75 volunteers, along with our short-term Program Managers and full-time staff.

Re-Member looks to the future with excitement and promise, working with the Lakota people to improve lives on Pine Ridge; better homes, better jobs, better health, and a better life.

When people come to Pine Ridge, and see the conditions in which people live, many are shocked. They ask "Why, in this day and age, in this country, are



there people living in these terrible conditions?" We are very grateful that our volunteers, friends and partners follow that question with another, far simpler one: "What can I do?"

The housing conditions here are deplorable, but they can be improved. We are here on Pine Ridge to help make that change, and to help fix this broken part of our world.

Thoughts on a “non-evangelical mission”

Keith Titus — Re-Member began with a somewhat unique concept to what some have called a “non-evangelical mission.” I personally reject this designation. First, since Re-Member is not a church-sponsored organization, but rather a non-profit corporation, we do not “mission” in the accepted sense of the word. Yet, most of our board members over the years would describe their motivation as springing from their faith, whatever that faith might be.



Rev. Keith Titus

My wife, Ginny, and I are ordained ministers in the United Church of Christ.

Still, we do not present ourselves to the Lakota people on Pine Ridge Reservation as “Christian Missionaries”

and all our literature explicitly indicates that we allow no overt evangelizing by our volunteers who come out to South Dakota and work with us. Re-Member is not controlled or directed by any denomination.

Throughout the years, Re-Member has entered into “covenantal relationships”

with individual churches. Those covenants recognize the importance of Re-Member’s activities, but do not allow for any authority or jurisdiction over those activities.

In our second newsletter, we said

...Re-Member’s approach to outreach ministry is based on our understanding of our Christian responsibility, mandate and desire to feed, clothe, shelter and heal those who are marginalized by society. We do not travel to the Reservation to preach, proselytize or convert.

Re-Member challenges those who come as volunteers to learn about and to respect indigenous culture and spirituality.

We see our role as friends and neighbors in a community with the Oglala Lakota people of Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, and call Pine Ridge home, just as they do.

Re-Member welcomes volunteers regardless of religious affiliation, as we do not promote any denomination or

faith. Colleges, universities and high schools across the United States have sent volunteers, many of them coming as a part of their “Spring Break Alternative” programs, or as a component of their Service Project requirements.

The Significance of “Re-Member”

Re-Member takes its name from the ancient definition, to “put back that which is broken; to *re-member*.” Conditions on Pine Ridge represent a part of our world that is broken, a part that we seek to put back together.

For Consideration

Re-Member is not a “Habitat for Humanity experience.”

We are not repairing a natural disaster that happened in minutes.

We are working in the midst of a manmade disaster, that has existed for generations.

We build with boards and nails, but we also build cultural awareness.

“If you have come here to help me you can go home. But if you see my struggles as part of your own survival, then perhaps we can work together.”

Lila Watson, Aboriginal

“Groups Helping People Stand”

Wawokiye is a Lakota word that loosely translates into “helping the people stand,” and is pronounced wah-whoa'-key-yea. In 2007, Re-Member began a new program aimed at expanding our outreach across Pine Ridge and making a difference in the lives of the people who live here. We began locating elders and disabled people who are unable to do a lot of the things that are necessary to keep their homes fixed up.

Whether building wheelchair ramps or skirting trailer homes; from re-roofing homes, to furnishing families with bunk beds or an outhouse, our efforts continue to adapt to the changing needs of individuals and families across Pine Ridge Reservation.

Poverty on Pine Ridge is overwhelming and generational. People end up spending all their energy just trying to survive day to day. Consequently, most people are unable to afford doing even the simplest of tasks on their homes. This is compounded greatly with the elderly and disabled. The need is very great, and the local tribal housing authority cannot keep up with the demand.

Re-Member is assisting those in the greatest of need. Bringing in our volunteers for the day, we are tackling whatever needs to be done. We are repairing walls, installing new lights, fixing porches and wheel chair ramps, cleaning, installing shelves and hauling away trash. We take lunch, sit down

and visit with the residents, making new friends throughout the day. At days' end, both our volunteers and our new friends are standing a little taller, together.



Before

After



Why Pine Ridge? History | Hope

The Pine Ridge Reservation is home to the Oglala Lakota. Constituting the eighth-largest reservation in the United States, the area is also one of the poorest locations in the country. Once home to Crazy Horse, Chief Spotted Elk (Big Foot) and Chief Red Cloud, Pine Ridge is rich with tradition and history. The land itself is forbidding, but enchanting, with wide-open plains giving way to the Badlands within the reservation boundaries.



Although census data is perennially disputed, population estimates range from 15,000 to 30,000. The poorest community in America, Allen S.D. is a reservation town, but the plight of its residents is not unlike many across the rez, with many lacking access to adequate health care, and basic necessities like indoor plumbing, running water, and electric service.



Many homes, often decades-old trailer homes or tribally controlled “cluster housing” communities are in disrepair. There is one full-service grocery store for the whole reservation, an area some 3,400 square miles. Summer temperatures spike well above 100 degrees, while winter temperatures can fall to well below zero, for days at a time. Drug abuse, alcoholism, teen suicide and diabetes plague the reservation.

In spite of this, the people of Pine Ridge, the Oglala Lakota Oyate are an inspirational, strong and enduring kind. Some of the most selfless and sincere people you may ever meet can be found right here, on the 'Rez. Survivors, the Oglala Lakota will intrigue you, and remind you that the saying is true: **Mitakuye Oyasin - we are all related.**



For More Information:

The Lakota Way, Stories and Lessons for Living, Joseph Marshall III (2002)

On The Rez, Ian Frazier (2001)

Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee (HBO)
Book by Dee Brown (1970)

We Shall Remain, (PBS)



“Whenever we pray we always pray ‘mitakuya oyasin’ for all our relations. We pray for all the black people, all the yellow people, all the white people and all the red people. We pray for all our relations.”

Lakota Elder

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Additional Information | Book Your Trip

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- To inquire about a trip to Re-Member, please contact our volunteer trip coordinator at trips@re-member.org
- For general questions, or for more information, please contact our South Dakota office at (605) 867-2282 or contact@re-member.org
- Visit us online at www.re-member.org for additional information



Sample Itinerary

Saturday (Arrival Day)

Arrive at Re-Member between 2:00 and 4:00 P.M.
 4:30 P.M. Orientation
 5:00 P.M. Supper
 7:00 P.M. Travel to Powwow (If Available)
 9:30 P.M. Quiet Time, Reading, Bathroom/Showers
 10:30 P.M. Lights Out

Sunday (Cultural Day)

7:00 A.M. Wake Up, Bathroom/Showers
 7:45 A.M. Breakfast
 9:00 A.M. Wisdom of the Elders, Begin Story of Wounded Knee - History Presentation
 9:45 A.M. Wounded Knee Cemetery - History and Reflection
 12:00 P.M. Lunch
 1:30 P.M. Hike in Badlands National Park, South Unit
 5:00 P.M. Dinner
 6:30 P.M. Cultural Program
 8:00 P.M. Roses & Thorns (Reflection of the Day)
 9:00 P.M. Free Time, Reading, Bathroom/Showers
 9:30 P.M. Quiet Time
 10:30 P.M. Lights Out

Monday (Wawokiye Work Day)

6:00 A.M. Wake Up, Bathroom/Showers
 6:45 A.M. Breakfast
 8:00 A.M. Wisdom of the Elders
 8:30 A.M. Depart for Work Day
 12:00 P.M. Lunch at Jobsite
 1:00 P.M. Work Day, cont'd
 5:00 P.M. Supper
 6:30 P.M. Cultural Presenter
 8:00 P.M. Roses & Thorns
 9:00 P.M. Free Time, Reading, Bathroom/Showers
 9:30 P.M. Quiet Time
 10:30 P.M. Lights Out

Note: All volunteers will be on wawokiye projects for three days (M/T/W or M/T/TH), with one day devoted to a tour of the reservation, conducted by a Lakota guide. Stops include Pine Ridge village, Red Cloud School, Bette's Kitchen (lunch) and Singing Horse Trading Post.

Cultural programs may include: speakers, Lakota singing and dancing, and making Lakota crafts.

All events are subject to change

“The man who sat on the ground in his tipi meditating on life and its meaning, accepting the kinship of all creatures and acknowledging unity with the universe of things, was infusing into his being the true essence of civilization.”

Chief Luther Standing Bear Oglala (Teton) Sioux