

Healing



Liberation

Blihéič'iyA na uŋ etáŋhaŋ uŋkiyáyapi kte čha aphiuŋkič'iyápi  
lé uŋ aíčhmani kiŋ máni ópħapi ye

TAKE COURAGE AND JOIN US IN THIS JOURNEY OF HEALING AND LIBERATION



THUNDER  
VALLEY

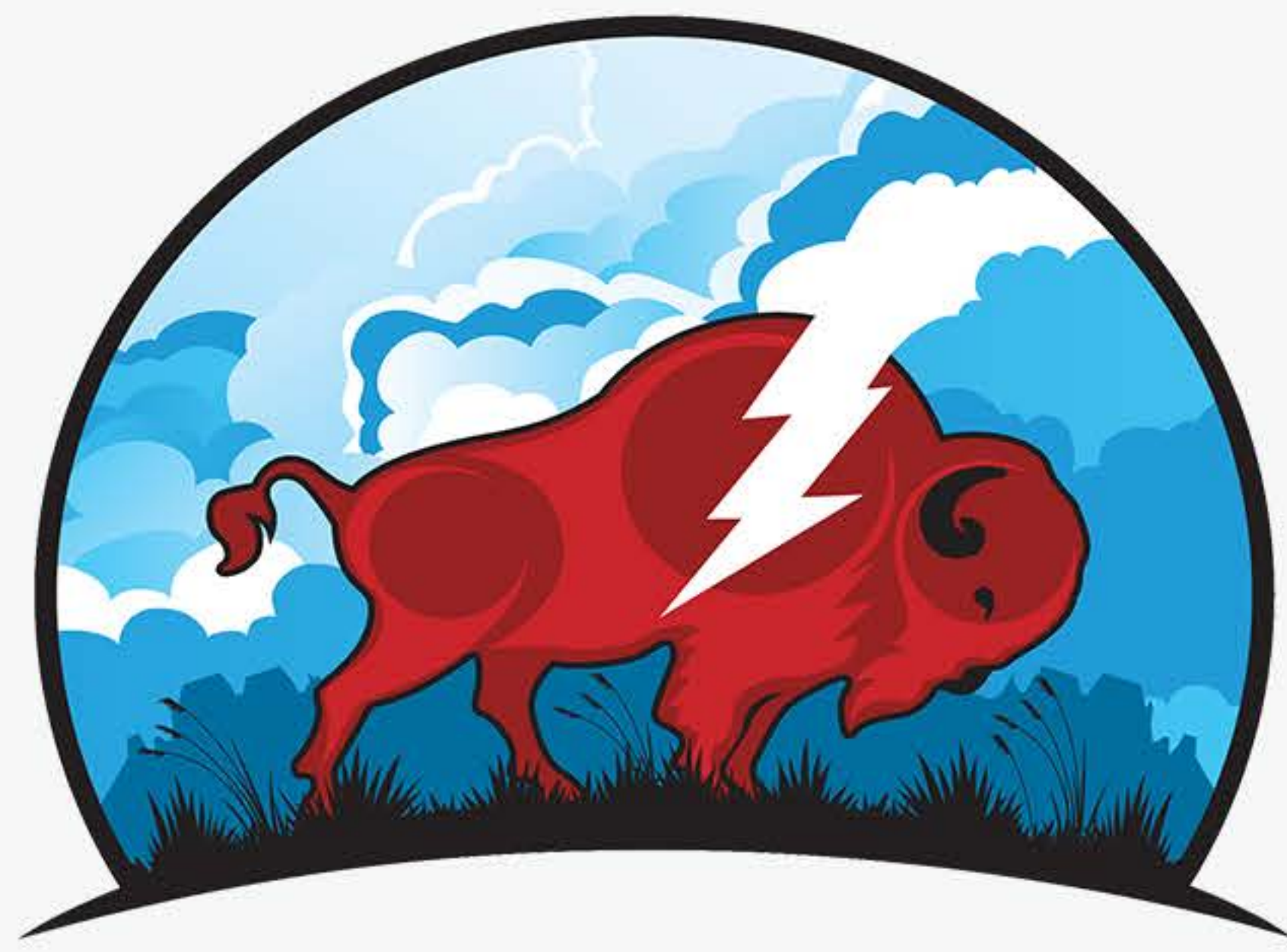
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

# THUNDER VALLEY CDC

Report To Our Community, Donors, & Partners  
2020 ANNUAL REPORT







## VISION STATEMENT

We envision a liberated Lakota nation through language, culture and spirituality.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Empowering Lakota youth and families to improve the health, culture, and environment of our communities through the healing and strengthening of cultural identity.

## 5 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

**FOSTERING HEALING THROUGH CULTURE**

**ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY**

**ADVOCATING CHANGE THROUGH POLICY**

**PROMOTING WELL-BEING THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTEDNESS AND REFINEMENT**



# **THUNDER VALLEY CDC**

## **2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mitakuyepi,

It is with great honor and humility that we provide this presentation of our work in 2020 at Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation (TVCDC). The year 2020 provided an unprecedented year for everybody on this sacred earth as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. So first and foremost, I want to acknowledge our relatives that are struggling with loss and hardship. I pray they have continued strength to endure this difficult time and prayers for good things to come. While the entire global community experienced substantial changes to our daily lives, Thunder Valley, like many other organizations across the world, had to process, adjust, and innovate our work to meet the needs of now while still planning for the future.

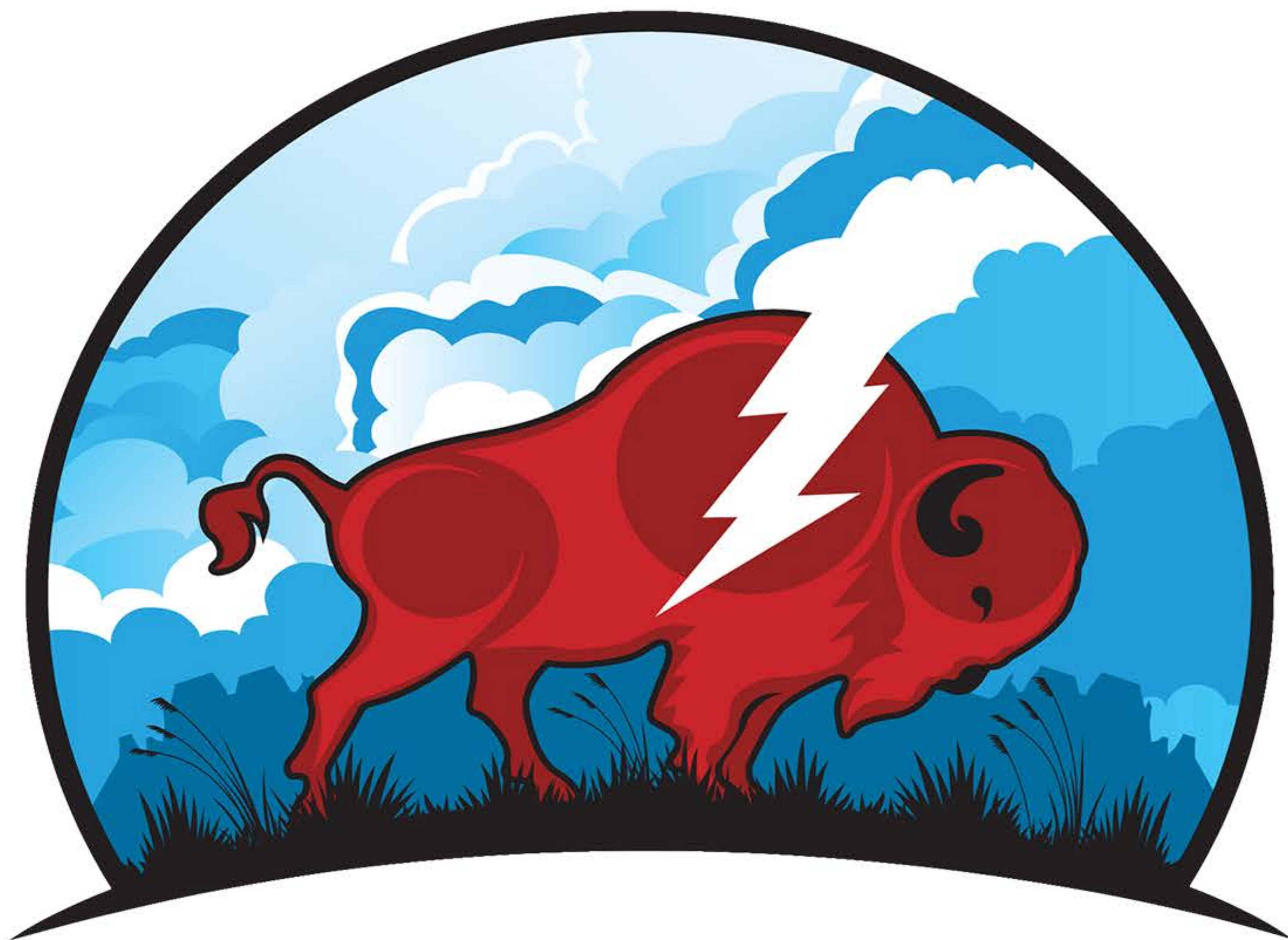
I am happy to share we were able to keep all positions within the organization notwithstanding the pandemic and the associated economic impacts. We responded to the needs of our communities swiftly and in collaboration with many other grassroots groups and individuals across the Reservation. Additionally, we have several highlights for our year across all of our initiatives including, but not limited to: Phase I construction of our authentically-Lakota playground was completed in the fall of 2020; many of our initiative programs transitioned to virtual platforms in an effort to provide continued resources to our community members;





Our Social Enterprise team completed a Business Incubator Feasibility Study; we hosted our 2nd Annual Thunder Fest musical festival in a safe and socially-distanced manner; and our organization began a rebrand process for launch early-2021 to signal a new era of TVCDC for leadership, approach, and vision.

Our vision is liberation for Lakota people and we are actively creating pathways to freedom through our language, lifeways and spirituality. We know that liberation begins with healing -- the healing of self and self-liberation are the beginnings of the liberation ripple that we aim to see in our families, extended families and community. We will not be liberated from the chains and vestiges of colonization if we ourselves are not free. We are proud to continue the legacy of our ancestors and relatives in this fight for liberation. We hope to be a part of a larger liberation movement that will continue for generations to come.



As we embark on this new era of TVCDC, we are excited for the opportunity to refine our work and prioritize five strategic directions: (1) fostering healing through lifeways; (2) promoting well-being through community engagement; (3) advocating change through policy; (4) building organizational connectedness and refinement, and (5) ensuring sustainability. We strive to be a better relative to our community and to do this we must reach those in our communities on the periphery, those most vulnerable, in order to realize liberation. We must create culture and mindset shifts in each individual, family and community for our people to be healthy, rooted, engaged, hopeful and free.

We are excited to share our community's healing story with each of you. Join us in our fight for freedom and liberation.

Pilamayaye,

Handwritten signature of Tatewin Means in blue ink.

Tatewin Means

Executive Director



# COVID-19 RESPONSE REPORT FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM

“The Mission of the Community Engagement Team is to promote well-being through community engagement by creating stronger relationships between our organization and community members”.

1. Covid-19 CTA
2. Covid-19 Response

In the year 2020 Thunder Valley CDC's Community Engagement team has been on the forefront of the Covid-19 response for the surrounding community. Last summer, we raised over \$100,000 with a Covid-19 Call to Action Campaign. The success of that campaign allowed us to provide elders and youth across the reservation with cleaning products, food, and other essential items during the pandemic, a crucial way to support and protect our communities. This was complemented by our partnership with Generations Indigenous Ways, Families Working Together, and others to form the Indigenous Response Network.

The biggest challenge for the Community Engagement team has been the pandemic. A lot of our engagements have been halted due to shelter in place orders, and no in-person engagements. We have moved to working heavily online and have shifted our community evaluations to surveys and interactive alternatives like zoom sessions.

Looking toward the future; because this is continuous work, Community Engagement will continue to work towards these goals and objectives with the intention of expansion.

(1600) Seventh Generation Cleaning supply kits have been delivered across the reservation to the elderly community in 2020.



(5815) elder care packages and 1250 youth kits have been delivered across the reservation in 2020.

(35) Voter registration and (50) Census Completions during our annual Thunder Fest Music Festival.

Voter Turnout increased by 30% on the reservation in comparison to the last election to 2016.



**DECORA HAWK, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR**



## FOOD SOVEREIGNTY INITIATIVE

“Empower the people to build regenerative food systems that improve health, protect the planet and create prosperity.”

The Food Sovereignty Initiative has had a busy year despite the pandemic. Staff was busy with community training, caring for a new batch of baby chickens and hosting the First Annual Lakota Food Summit. The summit was a great success. The Food Sovereignty Coalition also expanded by inviting more tribal community members and non-profit organizations to the meetings and training. The weather and pandemic did have an impact on programming.

### OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

The Food Sovereignty Initiative hosts training for community members. These training sessions will help our Native people become more sustainable and economically developed. Some training topics are: canning, gardening, and buffalo harvesting. We had our First Annual Lakota Food Summit, which was a great turn out. The TVCDC Food Sovereignty Director expanded the Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition members by inviting more tribal community members and non-profit organizations to the monthly meetings.



### IN DEPTH

The First Annual Lakota Food Summit was led and organized by the Thunder Valley Food Sovereignty Director with the co-sponsorship Partnerships With Native Americans. The Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition also helped and organized the summit. The coalition is local nonprofits organizations such as: Partnerships with Native Americans, Oyate Teca, One Spirit, Families Working Together, South Dakota State University Extension (SDSU), Badlands RC&D, Red Cloud Indian School, Natural Resource Conservation (NRCS), All Nations Gathering Center, Oglala Lakota College-Agricultural Extension, TaTanka Bar, and Indigenous Generations.

The Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition expanded by inviting more tribal community members and non-profit organizations to the monthly meetings, making sure there is the proper training that the community requests in order to become sustainable. By having training for the community it is very important to help our Native people and children to eat healthier.





### CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The greatest challenge that the Food Sovereignty Initiative faced was the pandemic. During the pandemic, we had to cancel a lot of the meetings and trainings. Our solution was to continue to have the Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition meetings monthly on zoom.

### SUMMARY

Moving into the year of 2021, the Food Sovereignty Director will continue to work with the Lakota Food Sovereignty Coalition organizing the Second Annual Lakota Food Summit to be held summer of 2021. We will be planting in the greenhouse again this year, rather than using starter plants, and using organic seeds for our produce. Hopefully this year, the weather will not be an issue as it was last year, when hail destroyed the crops. The Food Sovereignty Director wrote a grant to get a high tunnel for the year of 2021, so this will be part of our big project that we are planning to work on.

In the Spring, we will be ordering more baby chicks for community members to start their own farms and a few head of buffalo to start a herd for Thunder Valley Farms.

NEWMAN'S OWN FOUNDATION \$20,000.00

GRANTS RECEIVED

NB3-\$9,000.00

NEW FIELD FOUNDATION GRANT  
\$100,000.00

Kari O'Neill, SDSU Community Vitality Program Manager  
"Dianne has been able to promote a working Coalition, where many stakeholders come together to promote local foods and food sovereignty."

Anita Hicks, Grant Director Badlands RC&D  
"The monthly meetings happen regularly, in person and now via Zoom, there is a sense of continuity with projects, and the member group has increased dramatically."



# HOUSING & HOME OWNERSHIP INITIATIVE

“TVCDC’s Housing and Homeownership Initiative mission is to provide our people with the tools and opportunity to build community wealth through asset building.”

The Housing and Homeownership Initiative is committed and passionate in helping families build and maintain a healthy financial future by providing: Financial Liberation Education, Housing opportunities, and Pathways to Homeownership in a group or one on one credit coaching setting.

We work hand and hand with clients to set up financial goals and a financial plan to help them gain financial liberation for themselves and their families. Our financial coaching allows a client to create a plan, set financial goals, and receive guidance and assistance with goals. This year, the Housing and Homeownership Initiative sold three homes in the TVCDC community. Housing and Homeownership also provided technical assistance for two other homes outside the community, but on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

# OVERVIEW OF OUR PROGRAMS

The Financial Liberation Classes we provide to our community are the most important piece of our initiative. As Lakota people, we are not taught how to handle money, take out a loan, or to save money. We see so many of our people fall victim to predatory lending or creating another emergency because they don’t have an emergency savings to cover if an emergency should happen. This all can be avoided with the help of basic financial education, planning, and commitment by each family. We reach our families through our annual credit pull campaign, where we do a soft pull

## IN DEPTH

We started the year off with our Flea Market/Open House’s. The Flea Market gives our community the opportunity to make some extra cash, declutter their homes, and barter with other community members for different items and needs. This also gave Thunder Valley CDC-Housing and Homeownership Initiative the opportunity to showcase a home and create an interest in our Financial Liberation Classes to interested families.

Although it may have taken us a while to get our Financial Liberation Classes on a virtual platform and our community interested in virtual classes we will continue virtually into 2021 for the safety of our community. We will continue to offer our Financial Liberation Classes virtually on a monthly basis.

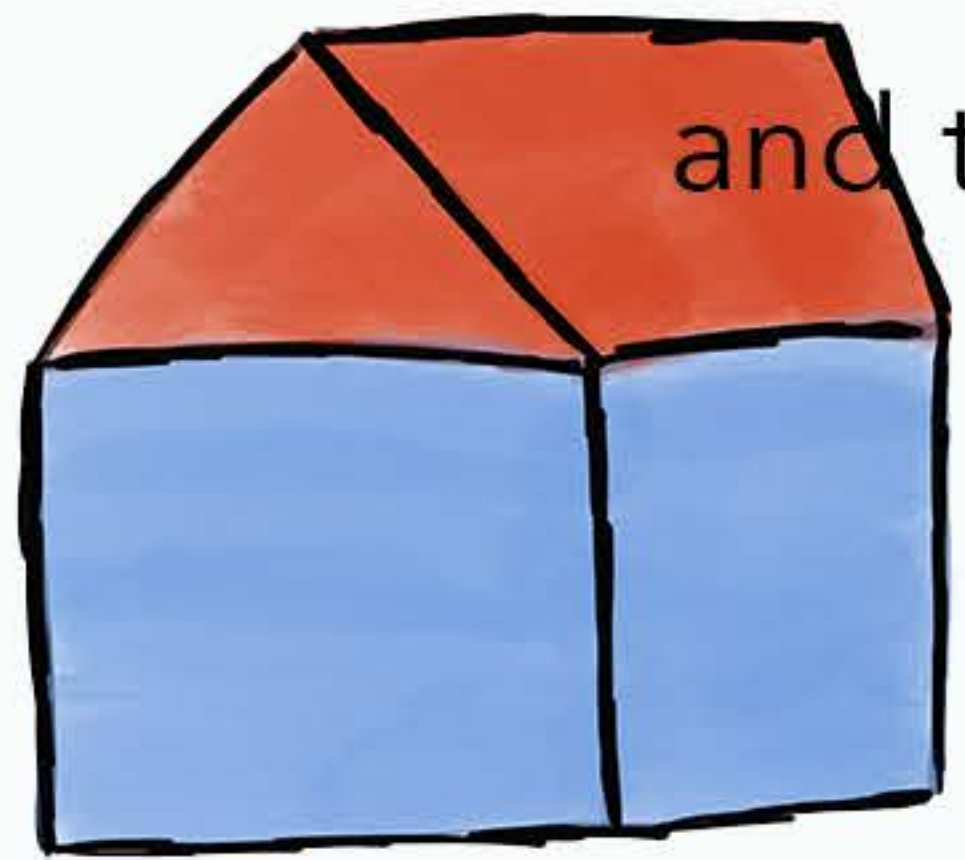




# CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

One of the major challenges the Initiative faced were the technological issues clients faced when moving to a virtual platform during the pandemic for classes. Our solution was to provide a one-page instruction sheet for clients to use for their PC or smartphone.

3 Houses sold in Thunder Valley Regenerative Community and technical assistance with 2 homes purchased on Reservation lands.



6 Community events and 2 Flea Market/Open House



CoVid Assistance for 5 Homeowners and 6 renters totalling over \$27,000.00

E LeBeau, Community Member

“Your classes are always so helpful and educational. You two helped me get started on a plan 2 years ago and it's a process but in the meantime I smashed a couple of short term goals thanks to your guidance. I respect and admire the work you ladies do for our people. My main long term goal is still in effect but glad I have the best guiding me anytime I need it.”

C Bordeaux, Community Member, New Homeowner

“The classes and coaching you ladies provide are so needed in our communities. I am a young professional but I learned so much by just attending the classes and having my one on one coaching sessions with you. I am also a first generational homeowner and the assistance you both provide and the knowledge you both carry helped me to be more confident in my purchase. You ladies always made sure I understood or would reword things so that I understood exactly what I needed to have that confidence. I am so thankful to Thunder Valley CDC for the opportunity to own a home. What was once a dream quickly became my reality once I made contact with Star and Ana.”





## LAKOTA LANGUAGE INITIATIVE

“Reclaim, restore, and revitalize our Lakota language and lifeways.”

The year 2020 was full of uncertainty. The pandemic forced us to create innovative approaches in delivering our services, focusing on what was important for our community but more importantly allow us to gain a clearer understanding of the vital importance of our language and lifeways. Our initiative works directly with children and families so during the pandemic we consistently had to refine our services to meet the needs of our children, families, and our community. Some key milestones were: Provide weekly virtual “circle time” to our children and families which included prayer, song, dance, and Montessori-themed lessons, create two licensed K-1, and design and create an authentic Montessori and Elementary curriculum in the form of worksheets, books, and stories. We understand that our reality has changed forever but we as Lakota people will no matter what continue to save our language and lifeways.

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

Our programming is all interconnected and working towards bringing back our language and lifeways with our children and families. From building adult proficiency, training educators, creating materials and curricula, and empowering our families our programs work diligently to help each other implement our services.

Our initiatives programming consists of high-quality Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Adult Education. Also, we work directly with the age group 12-18 to implement youth activities through our language, design curriculum for our programs, preserve our language and thought through our elder programming. And finally, we are consistently working towards creating our own centralized building that houses our programming and continues to focus on Lakota Immersion Montessori.

## IN DEPTH

From the end of March 2020 through the rest of the 2020 year, all our in-person services were moved to an online format. Throughout the pandemic, our Montessori guides and providers continued to refine their services via Zoom, Seesaw, and Gsuite.

Our Adult Education program consists of our staff language learners, community members, and parents. Our programming also went virtual through Zoom during the entire pandemic. As a result, our services reached the whole family, making a bigger impact.



Our Elementary Education provided K-3rd elementary services from January to May of 2020 at the Red Cloud Indian School. In June, we relocated our programming to the Pine Ridge School which is a Bureau of Indian Education school.

## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

From our staff having to work from home and our children having to learn via online platforms, and to the coronavirus affecting our community we faced a lot of adversities. These challenges were met with very innovative approaches from our staff, leadership team, and community directly connected to our language and lifeways.

## SUMMARY

We look forward to safely opening our doors and providing in-person services, launching our applications for our children, providing Adult Education programming, and reconnecting with our community in ways we could not because of the pandemic. Our programming will continue as follows:

### **Lakota Immersion Montessori**

Provide quality Lakota Montessori Early Childhood Education through our Lakota language and lifeways.

### **Lakota Elementary Immersion**

Provide a community space to provide Lakota elementary education through our Lakota language and lifeways.

### **Adult Language Education**

Increase knowledge and confidence in the Lakota language within our staff, families, and communities.

### **Waníyetu Tópa Yagláps'e Lakhól'iyapi | 4 Years to Fluency**

Produce fluent Lakhóta language speakers and educators

### **Wówapi na Itówapinaškánškan Káǵapi | Curriculum Development**

Develop authentic Lakota curriculum

### **Lakhótiya Škínčiyapi | Youth Activities**

Promote wellness and health through physical activities

## **Wówahokúnkhiye | Teaching of Our Elders**

Preserve the history and knowledge of our fluent speakers  
**School Design & Development**  
Plan, Design and Construct an authentic Lakota Montessori school onsite of our Regenerative Community Development.

260 HOURS

Over 260 hours of one-on-one language training and study for our Initiative staff



From January to March - Over 70 children received full in-person immersion services ages preschool through 3rd grade.



### **200 Participants in our Fall 2020 -**

"Four-Years-to-Fluency" program. This is one of the largest attempts to provide language classes for our

### **Emily Charging Crow-Nelson, Parent & Montessori Guide**

"Being able to stay home with my own children and work was difficult but rewarding. I gained an even closer bond with my family because we literally did everything together from the moment we woke up to the moment we went to bed. Doing everything online, working from home, participating in our programming allowed me to gain an understanding of how important my family is, my language and ways are and allowed me to safely navigate through the difficulties."



# REGENERATIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

“The Regenerative Community Development Initiative integrates the values expressed by the community through a healthy, innovative, and culturally appropriate built environment to promote systemic change.”

In 2020, we completed the first round of construction on an authentic Lakota playground. We also completed a solar array for our Community Center & Bunkhouse. We pursued new financing tools for the continuation of construction of fourteen single-family homes. And, we completed updates to the TVCDC Design Standards, Guidelines and Procedures. We also completed a landscape design and soil health guide.

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

The Regenerative Community Development Initiative continues to realize design and construction projects that advance the vision of the community and the organization for a community that supports the healing and liberation of Lakota people. This includes projects related to: infrastructure, landscaping, housing, agricultural buildings, signage, commercial and recreational spaces. Participation and dialogue with all community members, not just from those that currently live and work in the Regenerative Community Development (RCD), is critical to what we do.

It ensures that what we build is rooted in our Lakota way of life and reflects who we are as a people. Our work towards improving sustainability continues.

## IN DEPTH

2020 was busy for the RCD Initiative. We installed a 19.4kWh solar array on the Community Center & Bunkhouse; adopted into our Design Guidelines, Standards, and Procedures two appendices that focus on plant communities and soil health. We added specific language in the main body of the DSGP document to bring greater focus to those topics; and began the research necessary to develop TVCDC’s first-ever Environmental Sustainability Strategic Plan. Our first full trailer load from the recycling collection pilot project diverted 820 pounds of recyclable materials from landfills. Lastly, we dedicated \$40,000 in grant funding to the production of a Renewable Energy Feasibility Study.

## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The challenges with property taxes have continued to evolve. We have been working to address residential property tax rates not just for homeowners in our development but for low-income individuals throughout Oglala Lakota County who have the highest tax rate in the country yet is also one of the most economically stressed.



## SUMMARY

We are incredibly excited to have several projects both on the drawing board and under construction for 2021. This includes completing storm damage repair work; restarting construction on the single-family homes; undertaking upgrades to the Porcupine Daycare; updating the Ceremony House; an outdoor dining area for apartment tenants; a third office building; and kicking-off the design of the public park, splash pad, and public restroom facilities.

Outside of our immediate project area, we've also made connections with other Indigenous organizations that are working in alignment with the RCD Initiative. One Rapid City aims to develop an Indigenous owned and operated housing development in Rapid City, while He Sapa Otipi is developing a Community Center in Rapid City on the land that will be secured through the Rapid City Land Swap. Both entities have invited the Director of Planning and Design to advise and collaborate with their teams during the initial planning process.



**65,392 kWh over produced by our solar panels was sold back to the grid**

**1,400 invoices and contracts from 76 vendors dating back 11 years were renamed, organized into folders and logged.**



### **Decora Hawk, Mother and Community Member**

"I remember when we first moved in. I was washing dishes, it was a nice day and I was looking out the window watching my daughters playing hand games in the center circle. And I cried. Because we did it. We changed the narrative."

### **Wicahpi Means, Mother, Community Member, Renter**

"I will have lived here almost two years. Prior to living here I rented a one-bedroom house in Pine Ridge. That space was not big enough for my family; we were without hot water once for 8mos, then again for 3mos; we went without heat for a whole winter; cats lived below the house. My baby has asthma and he was always sick. Since we've lived here he hasn't been sick at all. It has been a relief not having to deal with that. That has been the biggest thing, it just feels good. I love living here. We have space now. It's just beautiful. We have laundry and we have two bathrooms! It's wonderful. it's been so good to us. My baby just loves it out here. He's so content and safe."



## SOCIAL ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE

“Social Enterprise is working to make the communities stronger by building community wealth - we do this by encouraging business development grounded in Lakota knowledge and values by making education and entrepreneurial opportunities more accessible to the Pine Ridge Reservation”.

Social Enterprise has been working at incorporating Lakota culture into the businesses. We provide technical assistance to Thunder Valley’s three start up companies: Thikaga Construction, Woyuha Property Management, and Owinza Quilting Company. Another major project we were involved in was collaborating with SweetGrass Consulting to complete the Business Incubator Feasibility Study. This Feasibility Study identified partners and funding sources. Our work on this project continues into 2021 with planned virtual events, data collection, and interviewing key opinion leaders.

### OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

Social Enterprise provided technical assistance to the three start up companies launched by Thunder Valley by helping them with their formation documents, state and tax filings, policies and procedures development, business plans and resource gathering. We work with the other Initiatives in the same manner. Our ongoing project is the development of the Business Incubator. The pandemic has played a big part in the activity of this project. 2020 has delayed the planned outreach for the Social Enterprise Initiative, with shelter-in-place ordinances and lockdown restrictions.

## IN DEPTH

Social Enterprise continued the relationship with DAWI(Democracy At Work Institute), a Cooperatives consultant, to assist Thikaga in further developing bidding and marketing strategies, funding and personnel coaching.

For the Business Incubator Market feasibility study with Sweet Grass Consultants, we started Developing the Program, identifying Partners and Funding Sources. Social Enterprise planned and hosted its first focus group in late March for the feasibility study with Thunder Valley’s staff. The surveys are drafted, Key Opinion Leaders, funding sources, and potential partners are being identified. Completed Application for the research review board and the OST RRB board approved the study on March 7th, 2020.







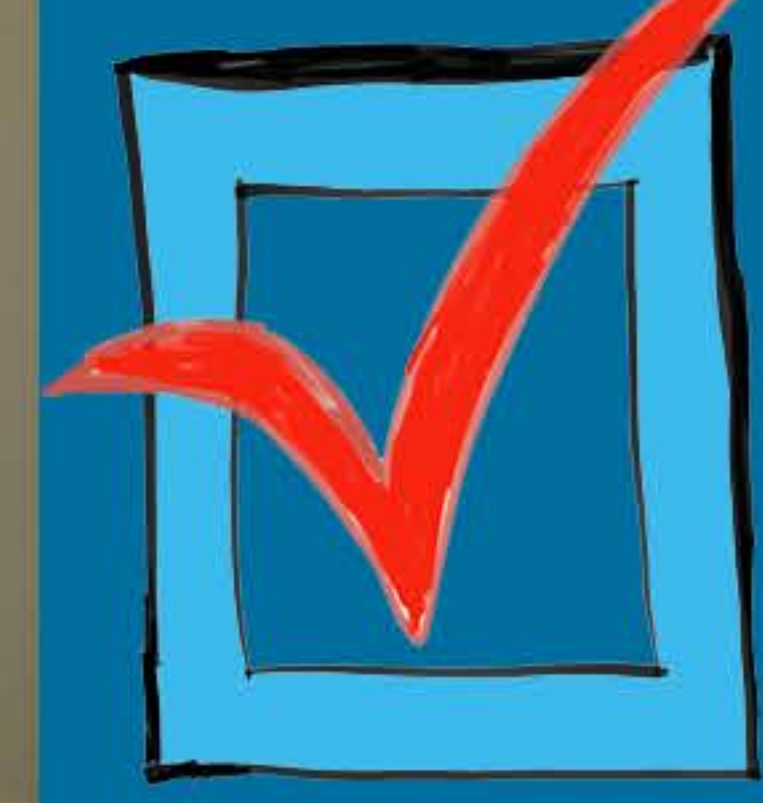
### CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Unfortunately, two of the companies, Owinza and Thikaga, had shut down during the pandemic restrictions. Social Enterprise continued to work remotely under the circumstances of the pandemic and provided services and worked on feasibility study.

### SUMMARY

Social Enterprise will keep working at incorporating culturally-relevant practices, methods of conducting business along with mainstream business know-how and considerations for Native American holistic healing in assisting the start up companies and assisting the other initiatives at Thunder Valley and the communities in general. After helping to complete the Business Incubator Feasibility Study, we are looking forward to the next phase of developing the Business Incubator. We will start by working on what services, programs and spaces will be offered and the building design and the funding sources for the Business Incubator.

Completed 20 new partner assessments for the Business Incubator



Had 26 Coaching/TA events



Hosted 8 Trainings/Workshops

### Alan Jealous, Thikaga Construction Co.

Social Enterprise chose to interview Alan Jealous( Thikaga Construction Co.) who was a participant or a member/owner of one of the start up companies that received Technical assistance from SE during the course of the year. Alan was also a worker in the workforce development program as a trainer for the participants. He was grateful for the assistance SE provided and he said he learned a lot of information.







## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

“Through the determination of young adults and the dedication of our local leaders, we are building a thriving workforce centered on improving financial, emotional, physical, and professional health while creating sustainable communities in Lakota Country. Our vision is a reservation in which our program has created a foundation for the future of sustainable workers, and there is no longer a need in our communities for a Workforce Development Program”.

With the coronavirus pandemic lingering and providing unpredictable circumstances, the Workforce Development met the challenge and started their 6th year with a new cohort, Cohort 6.

In spite of the number of rising cases, 20 brave young men and women braved the pandemic and showed up for training. These young adults adhered to the rules set forth by the CDC and practiced social distancing, mask wearing, frequent hand washing, and testing.

Training was a large part of the Cohort with some major achievements being:

14 participants received CPR/1st Aid certification from the American Heart Association

7 participants and 1 WFD staff member received training and certification for CERT (Community and Emergency Response Team) by FEMA

Cohort participants received 584 hours of construction training in spite of the current pandemic

### OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

Within the cohort there were two programs that addressed problems with abuse, suicide, family dysfunction/restoration.

The first program is “The Good Road to Life” given by Dr. Clayton Small with the purpose to strengthen family involvement, family preservation and responsible fatherhood.

The other program given by Morris Brewer addressed Family Restoration. Participants met with Morris on a weekly basis in sessions that addressed family, self-preservation, and trust. Participants got to share experiences, and expectations while processing feedback from each other and Morris.

### IN DEPTH

In review of the milestones mentioned previously, three stand out as accomplishments. First is the fact that they did receive 584 hours of construction training in spite of the current pandemic.

Second is the certifications they received in CPR/1st Aid and OSHA training. These certifications are imperative since most employers require these prior to employment. Finally, the last milestone I consider a success is the fact that they assisted other initiatives in their missions, whereas this helped their missions thrive in this pandemic, and ultimately learning the importance of community engagement, which is one of the 5 strategic directions set forth by Thunder Valley.



# CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The biggest challenges that Workforce Development faced was the current coronavirus pandemic and the closure of Oglala Lakota College Center. Thunder Valley and Workforce development met this challenge “head on” by following the CDC’s recommendations for social distance, frequent hand washing, frequent individual testing, mask-wearing; and continued self-study by the GED students.

## SUMMARY

In 2021, we will be starting a new cohort which will receive the same training as the previous cohort. We will continue to assist other initiatives as needed. Training and education will continue in programming. Another event that received notoriety was the Motorcycle Poker Run which is scheduled for the 2nd annual event in August. This event will afford the participants to engage with members outside of the Thunder Valley and the reservation as motorcycle enthusiasts and riders will attend this event.

Proceeds to benefit a local organization that will align with the mission and vision of Thunder Valley CDC.

### CONSTRUCTION TRAINING



### SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL TRAINING.



7 participants received 20 hours of training from FEMA for CERT(Community Emergency Response Team) training. This certification also allows them to register with FEMA and become eligible for future employment.

### Carlos Benally, Workforce Development Participant

“Yes I would definitely recommend the Workforce development program to young adults who want to learn a lot with a skill, the culture, and other opportunities at Thunder Valley. But they need to know that it takes commitment and dedication to get there everyday and give it their best while there”.

### Devin Ferguson, Workforce Development Participant

“I didn't want to go to Arizona but I’m trying to get a job right now. I am applying at a dealership in Rapid City at the moment and need a reference. I’m also looking at enrolling in college for basic stuff. I miss going to Thunder Valley and expecting something new to do or going to a job site learning new construction things. Yeah I would recommend a friend to go and apply for the cohort cause it was fun and I learned a lot. I got some free certifications that will last me awhile.”







## YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

“The Youth Leadership Development Initiative’s (YLDI) mission to cultivate opportunities for Lakota youth that enhance leadership skills, promote personal and community wellbeing, and sustain culture and spirituality in order to guide generations of our youth toward an awakening of self-determination, self-sufficiency and ultimately liberation”.

We successfully implemented a variety of programs and services during the national COVID-19 Pandemic while staff worked remotely. One new initiative we introduced was “The Girl Society”. In this group, we hosted mentoring workshops for approximately 37 women. This program was a great success and had an amazing turnout and commitment from women in our community to make a difference in the lives of girls. We also began plans to develop a reservation wide Youth Leadership Society with our Community Engagement staff.

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

**Lakotiya Skinciyapi-** A mentoring program which engages high school students to mentor elementary age students through sports while incorporating the Lakota language.

**High School Summer Leadership Academy-** We work with youth to grow their confidence, cultural awareness, and initiative to be leaders in their community.

**Gymnastics Program--**In partnership with Little Wound School, we provided a free gymnastics club which was two days a week for 4th grade and under.

**The Girl Society Meetings-**Ages 8-16 years old on an online platform, covering educational and informational topics such as Lakota history and culture, self defense, women and girl’s health, peer pressure, bullying, substance and alcohol use. In 2020 we hosted a combined format of virtual and small in person Adverse Childhood Effects trainings/workshops

## OVERVIEW

In 2020, we received funding from IMAGEN network and began a “Girl Society” with local girls and adult women as mentors. We became members of the Imagine Network whose mission is Strengthening native girls’ by protection and safety, Reclaiming matrilineal traditions through girl-centered programming. We began in partnership with Pine Ridge School and hosted three in person sessions before we had to discontinue due to COVID-19 Pandemic. through cultural awakening and education.



We created a mission statement and a local group name. In addition a local girl society logo was created for the group.

WWHY Girls--

W- woohitike (bravery)

W- wasake (strong)

H- hpecakesni (assertive)

Y- yuhican (awaken)



Mission statement- The mission of "WWHY Girls Society" is to empower and support girls through mentoring in order for them to become strong, brave, and assertive Lakota Winyan

## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

COVID-19 challenges included, remote work of staff, talking with funders about changing timelines and grant activities, transforming our program ideas into a virtual reality. We established an in- person distance learning support group for young people and hired two temporary staff with generous support from donors.

## SUMMARY

We are excited to grow our programs by hiring a Co-Director for the Initiative. The Co-Director will be a key team member with additional responsibilities from a Coordinator as seen in previous years in the YLD Initiative. The Co-Director will build relationships and increase the number of activities and programs we offer in the next year.

The Director is also increasing the capacity of the initiative to include health and wellness among our communities. The YDL Team is looking forward to in-person summer youth leadership activities and sports, among other goals and objectives in the Initiative.

Jan.1st-Dec.31st  
2020

115



Events/Activities



Engaged around  
2,215 youth in  
events/activities

Caleb Tuttle, Youth Leadership  
Participant

30 students

30 students from  
Kindergarten  
through High  
school enrolled in  
the distance  
learning youth  
support group.

"I think it taught us to be better leaders in our community. It also helped us understand more Lakota Language and how we preserved foods traditionally. Also, it taught us to better our future; not just our individual futures, but also the future of our Lakota community."

Maraya Irving, Bells & Shawls Participant

"It's a great opportunity for children and youth to practice powwow dancing and singing in a less formal powwow setting. Kids get the opportunity to make friends and learn in a non-classroom setting. Sometimes pow wows can be intimidating for people who aren't familiar with powwow and this gives families an idea of how things function and become more comfortable powwows."



# CLOSING MESSAGE

Mitákuyepi,

The COVID-19 Pandemic has forced us to rethink the way in which we interact and communicate with one another. Through this time, we have been able to remain innovative in our approach to serving our community using modern technology and innovative solutions. If we can sum up the year of virtual meetings it would be with the phrase “you’re on mute.”

2020 has been a hard year for all of us and our prayers are with all who lost their loved ones. With the limited resources we have access to locally, we have been humbled and are so very thankful for the outpouring support and encouragement we have received from our community, partners, and donors. During this time, we have set new standards for our organization around donor stewardship and how we communicate our work to those we serve.

Highlights for 2020 fundraising include:


Online Giving – 1217 gifts totaling \$190,920, with 46% of those donations being recurring gifts.

Donations (Mail/EFT) – \$685,202

Government Grants – \$337,500

Cares Act Pay Roll Protection Program – \$494,325

Foundation Grants – \$3,476,769



We also launched Thunder Valley’s Endowment and Reserve Fund. This fund will ensure that work of our organization is rooted and sustained in our communities for the next seven generations.

During this time the Kendeda Foundation stepped up to support our vision for the future by awarding us a matching grant of \$878,756. In June 2023 we will have raised a total of \$1,757,530 to meet their match.

In 2020 we raised \$470,000 toward our Endowment and Reserve Fund.

Our Donors and Foundation Partners are a testament to the work that we do here at Thunder Valley. It is their commitment to our Vision and Mission have helped us to make continued impact in our communities. Thank you and I look forward to what we can achieve together in 2021 as the Pandemic subsides and we are able to be together in person again.

wóphila thánka,



Kyle White

Director of Advancement