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BEACON VOYAGES FOR SERVICE: 2013 Alternative Spring Break Trip to the Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota

Sherrod Williams

University of Massachusetts Boston, sherrod.williams@umb.edu

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BEACON VOYAGES FOR SERVICE

2013 Alternative Spring Break Trip to the Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota

Summary/Abstract

This March, fourteen UMass Boston students traveled to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota to address the pressing issues of poverty faced by the Oglala Lakota people by assisting in construction efforts such as repairing stairwells, building children's bunk beds, and installing protective skirting around mobile homes to help increase the overall quality of life on the reservation. In conjunction with the service work, special attention was placed on fostering relationships and participating in a cultural exchange with the Oglala Lakota community that has created awareness about the tribulations faced by the United States of America's most disadvantaged demographic.

Goals and Objectives

- Expose students without prior experience in the field of philanthropy to the benefits of service-learning projects in a cross-cultural setting
- Promote positive change on the Pine Ridge Reservation through relationship building
- Reaffirm the position of all Americans as a part of the maintenance of indigenous traditions in the USA, especially given the history of native and non-native relations in the past
- Create awareness of real-life poverty in rural America and bridge the gap between cultural regions within the continental United States
- Participate in labor-intensive volunteer work to produce change of lasting value



Results/Impacts



Over the course of the week, students gained an understanding and appreciation of the Oglala Lakota people, after having heard and seen firsthand, the struggles of life on the Reservation. The students that participated in this trip have come to recognize their capabilities to effectuate change and have made a promise to be more proactive in advocating for the indigenous communities in our country.

Approaches and Methods



The team partnered with RE-MEMBER, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of reservation life through relationship building, shared resources, and volunteer sources. The outreach work completed on the trip is multi-faceted: students provided the manpower needed to better the living conditions on the reservation while upholding cultural preservation.

Conclusion/Next Steps

The trip participants are still committed to helping the Oglala Lakota community. The team will be hosting a post-trip exhibition in late April to showcase what they learned during their alternative spring break featuring exclusive video footage of Lakota speakers, traditional food, and special cultural presentations. The team is currently taking monetary donations which will go towards sending out shipments of second-hand clothing out to Pine Ridge, buying building material for RE-MEMBER to continue its construction efforts on the reservation, purchasing school supplies for underfunded classrooms, and reprinting their team sweatshirts to give as gifts to Lakota elders. Quite amazingly, some students have also pledged to return to the site this summer to continue helping the Lakota.

References and Resources

The BVS Alternative Break Official Website

www.bvssouthdakota.info

RE-MEMBER Organization

www.re-member.org



Additional Information

Break Away – The Alternative Break Connection

<http://www.alternativebreaks2013.org/>

How to Help Pine Ridge

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/organizations-sseek-donations-improve-life-pine-ridge/story?id=14729358>