

AUG 26 1993

OGJLALA LAKOTA COLLEGE

Chartered by the Oglala Sioux Tribe
Elgin Badwound, President,

BOX 490, KYLE, SOUTH DAKOTA 57752
Lloyd Eagle Bull, Board Chair

8/23/93

Susan E. Sechler, Director
Rural Economic Policy Program
The Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies
1333 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Suite 1110701070
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms Sechler:

Please find enclosed a draft of the the first part of the study as we have come to develop it at this point. Of course, this is not exactly the study we started out to do four years ago.

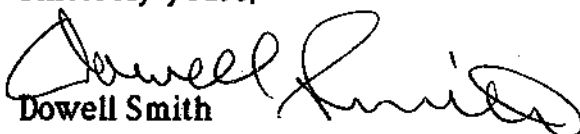
The most important thing I learned is summarized in the first interview transcribed in chapter two of the enclosed paper. That is, that many traditional people here do not view poverty in anything like the same way most social scientists do. This is important because it influences how and who they will talk to such social issues about.

In the various activities we conducted through this research it became clear that the first necessity concerning poverty here is to do basic research on the cultural idea systems involved with the pervasive and persistent economic poverty. For instance, the President of our college told me emphatically that if all our graduates were economically successful, we were probably failing. Failing because they would have had to forget their traditional roots in order to become economically successful in this environment.

I am working now to correlate further segments of these and other interviews with several questionnaires and with data on our graduates. I hope to have a draft finished by the end of September.

I very much appreciate the patience you have extended us to date. I am learning a great deal from this work and expect to carry on with some of the lines that have developed. Hopefully, I am able to faithfully represent a small part of the world here in a way that makes some sense to others.

Sincerely yours,


Dowell Smith

AUG 26 1993

Handwritten initials

**An Ethnoinquiry on Poverty:
People's Commentaries in a
Reservation World**

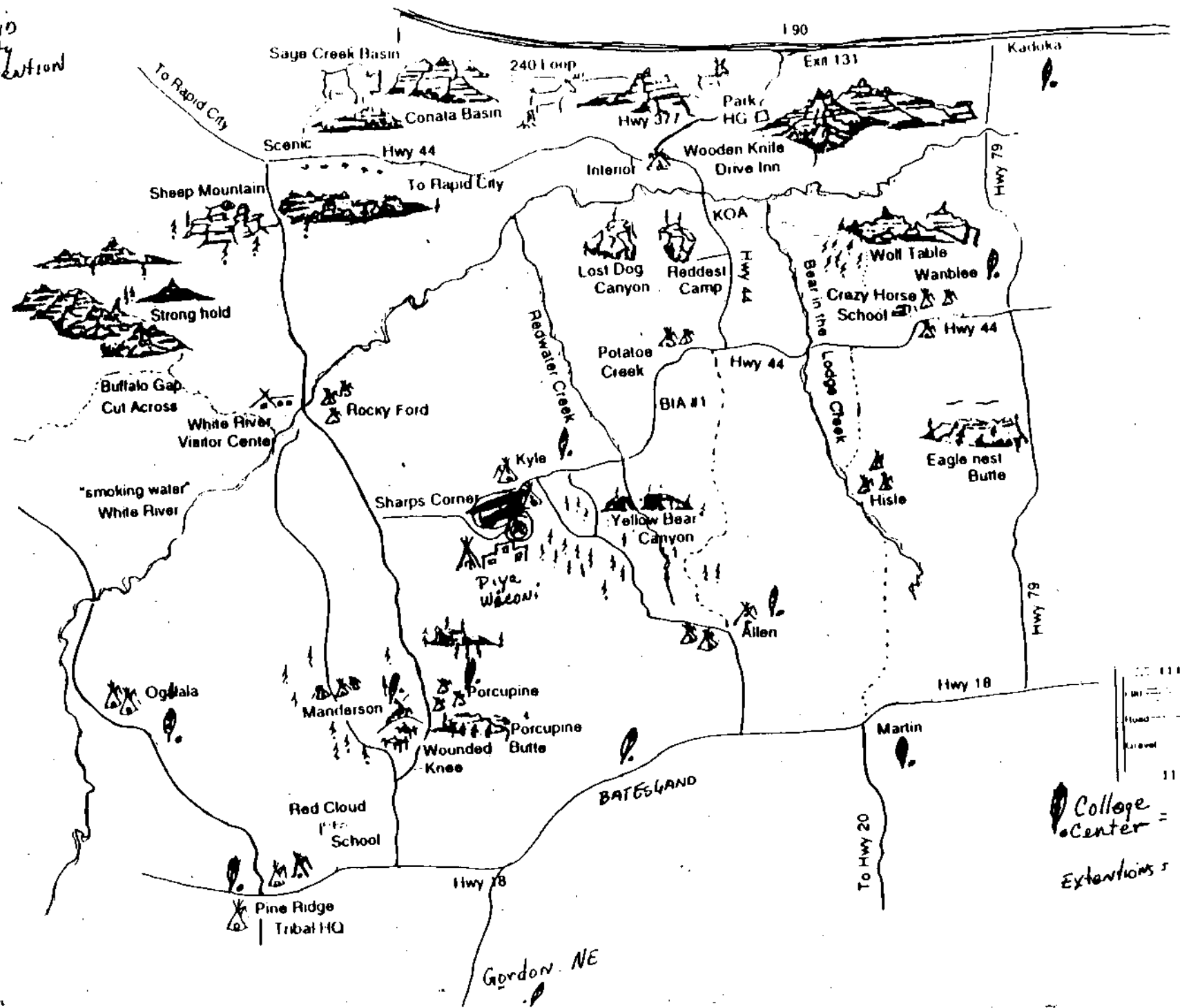
(C)
edited by Dowell Smith

Attached please find a draft copy of the first chapters of a report being prepared for submission to the Aspen/ Ford Foundation in completion of a grant they awarded for study of the college's impact on reservation poverty. Your suggestions and comments would be greatly appreciated. Please do not quote or duplicate this study until the final draft is prepared and shared. Thanks.

August 1993

Oglala Lakota College
Box 490, Kyle, SD 57752

Rapid City Extension



College Center = 9
 Extensions = 3

An Ethnoinquiry on Poverty: People's Commentaries in a Reservation World

(C)

edited by Dowell Smith

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study grew from a plan to look closely, lovingly and yet critically at the unique college we have been building with communities on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation for the past twenty three years. Born of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Government's view of how the War on Poverty ought to be fought, Oglala Lakota College has grown and matured in a time not friendly to government and educational attacks on poverty. Indeed, Shannon County on the reservation was once again reported to be "the poorest county in the United States" by the Bureau of the Census in 1990. Given this basic statistic, then, one wonders how the people affected interpret the relationships involved during this period when poverty across America has increased (Bartlett and Steele, 1992; Phillips, 1990).

As a participant observer for the past twenty four years of struggle and development, I have, of course, my own ideas of how things are going. What I have tried to do in this re-search is to re-inform my own vision, to renew my sense of the wonder and awe at what goes on here everyday. My hope is that by drawing a variety of people in the college/reservation community into a public discourse on the nature of the college and its work in this unique environment we can deepen and extend the fundamental work of the college. Further, I would hope that this record of our conversations and my comments about them will provoke people to carry on further discussions like these. This study, then, does not so much provide answers as it tries to open up discussion and consideration. Indeed, part of the task in hand is to clarify for us all just what the fundamental questions are as we try to build a community of

difference (Tierney, 1993). One voice not privileged below is that of current students. They are heard merely through questionnaires and not through conversations. Something I hope we can pick up on as I suggest in the conclusion.

Before we enter into the conversational and documentary realms reported below, I want to provide a framework for understanding this work. My task has been and is to find ways to faithfully re-present the world as it is seen, experienced and produced by various members of the reservation community. My initial concern in the research was to document the occupational and economic success of students. As will be seen, this project led into alternative realms of meanings and purpose where economics takes on meanings distinct from and even contrary to my initial orientations. Not surprisingly, these concerns current in the life at Pine Ridge resonate with many concerns of sociology as a discipline.

As an instructor I am struck by the public vocabulary of motives my students use when asked to voice in class why they want to go to college. They consistently and overwhelmingly say, "To help my people," or, "To help improve things for our people." This has been consistent for the twenty three years of my involvement. In contrast, students at a private college in Michigan where I taught for a period in the seventies said either, "To get a good job," or, "Because my parents wanted me to." No Oglala student has yet given me the later response although in recent years a few do mention job preparation. Other disciplines may find different responses but my comparison is within the same courses.

Has Oglala Lakota College in fact helped its students and graduates to help their people? And, has the kind of help they have been enabled to give their people been constructive? As we know, some have suggested that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." Are the good intentions of the founders of Oglala Lakota College adequate to guide the institution through the rocky deserts of contemporary American policy and economic hard times?

My own understanding of the basic issues involved has been reconstructed by the interviews and discussions I have had over the past four years as I pursued this study. Sociologists have long

suggested that economics is the pre-eminent social institution in American society (cf., Parsons, 1951). That is, that family, religion, education and leisure take their fundamental orientations from economic values and needs. For instance, "to get a better job," or "to make more money," or "for financial security" are justifications that explain decisions to move families, leave families, and to create latch key children are some examples. Some highly effective action oriented sociologists (eg., Higman, 1968) have suggested that one of the fundamental tasks of programs working to move the poor into the "mainstream" is to loosen the bonds of family, community and close friends so that the persons involved can move on. Sennett and Cobb have called these broken bonds The Hidden Injuries of Class (1973). Many a literary career has been launched from the pad of these injuries and the pain of leaving the old neighborhood, ethnic group, and the bosom of the family. Rodriquez in The Hunger of Memory, (1982) for an anguished example of someone lamenting yet celebrating this necessity. We will find people struggling with these issues in the conversations reported below..

Yet, a contrary strain runs through the voices of many sociologists over the years from Durkheim (1912) and C. Wright Mills, (1940, 1963) to Nisbet, (1967) and Bellah, (1985) we find concern expressed for the loss of community and fellowship. Some would dismiss this as nostalgia for the *gemeinschaft* of days gone by. Others see it as the Achilles heel of contemporary society. Whatever, the terrain of the debate is familiar if unique as we travel these critical paths with Oglalas mapping out their lives on the fringes of American society today. The historian Fredrick Teggart suggested that the best way to see what was going on was from the fringe (Rose, 1993a). As a people on the margin Lakotas may tell us much about the center. We turn now to a description of the reservation and the college as a backdrop and framework for the discussions following about the nature of poverty and the role of the college in the life with this poverty.

The Reservation and the College

The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is an administrative unit for the United States government as represented by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The reservation also has an elected tribal council under the provisions of an Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) constitution adopted in 1934. The Great Sioux Nation that negotiated the Treaty of 1868 claimed as its territory all of the land from the Platte River in southern Nebraska to Canada and from the Missouri to the Tetons. Most Lakotas today feel that subsequent treaties cutting this territory down and separating the seven bands onto the remaining scattered islands of land were illegal because of an 1868 provision requiring consent of three fourths of the adult males of the tribe before any changes could be made. No such consent has ever been obtained. (Cf., Burnett and Koster, 1974; Deloria and Lytle, 1983; 1984; Hassrick, 1964; Hyde, 1937; Lazarus, 1993)

Nonetheless, the Oglala Band of the Teton Nation is now situated on a piece of land in southwest South Dakota roughly ninety by fifty miles with Nebraska as the southern border. Shannon County is wholly on the reservation and Jackson County is one half on the reservation. Bennett County is seen as part of the reservation by the Tribal Government and Bureau of Indian Affairs services are provided there. However, the State has used the large number of non-Indian residents to firmly establish its presence and authority on all Bennett County land not in trust status.

Robert Gay was an early student at the college who came back to teach in the Lakota Studies Department until his untimely death in the spring of 1993. In the college *Self Study Report* (Smith, 1992) he presented the following account of recent reservation history.

In the 1950's the U.S. government again attempted to abrogate treaties by passing House Concurrent Resolution 108 which would end federal funding and terminate Indian tribes by transferring jurisdiction to the states. Fortunately for the Lakotas, nationwide support for the Indian tribes eventually ended Congress' attempts to end federal protection.

The 1960's ushered in the era of the 'great social experiment' of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Social reform came to reservations in work programs such as CAP, ANA, OEO, CHR, NYC, and New Careers.

These federal programs, while providing much needed income, soon proved to be nothing more than menial labor jobs.

President Nixon introduced the self determination era of Indian tribes in the seventies. He signed Public Law 93-638, the Indian Self Determination Act. Under this legislation, Indian tribes are allowed to contract for services previously provided by the BIA. For the first time Indian parents were allowed to control their own schools and to implement cultural programs to preserve Lakota religion, language, history and culture.

Today, the Oglala Lakota reside on the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwestern South Dakota. The 50 by 90 mile reservation is all that is left of over 40 million acres. In 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court, in awarding the Sioux Nation \$125 million for the loss of the Black Hills, stated: "A more ripe and rank case of dishonorable dealings will never in probability be found in our history." (United States vs. Sioux Nation of Indian, 100 S. Ct. 2716, 1980).

It is ironic that the Oglala Lakota today are the poorest of the poor. According to the 1990 Census, the Oglala Lakota per capita income was \$3,417. Shannon County, which makes up a large portion of the Pine Ridge Reservation had the highest level of poverty in the entire United States (63.1%)

The Oglala Lakota continue to struggle for existence. Once known for their ferocity in war, they have now turned to the U.S. judicial system to continue the battle for cultural survival. The Oglala Sioux Tribal Council has become the recognized leader in rejecting government offers of cash as compensation for losses of million acres of land. They have organized the various Sioux tribes into the Black Hills Steering Committee to spearhead a drive to have the land returned. While all bills introduced into Congress have died a premature death, Oglala Lakota leaders, like their proud ancestors before them, continue to struggle for equality and justice against all odds. As the Lakota enter the 20th century, they have organized a coalition of Indian tribes to protect their water rights, developed gaming compacts with the State of South Dakota and continue to quest for sovereignty by insisting on Indian hiring quotas in all contracts and grants awarded to Indian tribes in Indian country.

In the early part of this century most Oglalas had established themselves as cattle ranchers and they made use of extended family structures to manage most of their remaining land (Robertson, unpublished). This self sufficiency was smashed in 1917 when Federal policy turned to leasing large tracts of land to corporations. Now, fewer than two hundred tribal members make their living solely from ranching. Transfer payments from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the State of South Dakota such as General Assistance grants (GA), and Aid for Families with Dependant Children (AFDC) flow to selected members of almost all families over time.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) administers programs funded for over ten million dollars per year. This is a dramatic increase from the mere three hundred thousand dollars administered as recently as 1969. In addition, the college and schools controlled by tribal chartered boards of directors currently control several million dollars in resources--all new developments in the past twenty three years. Yet for the most part these funds represent a transfer of control from the BIA rather than a net increase in resources available. Moreover, little opportunity for capital formation and retention has been carved out of these pass through funds targeted to consumption.

The OST government has followed the BIA lead in using eight "boss farmer" districts to elect representatives and distribute goods and services. Pine Ridge Village as the largest community (around 3500) on the reservation also has a council delegation--the largest. The college, too, uses these boundaries in the election of board members and the formation of local advisory boards.

The college was founded in 1971 after three years of work with the University of Colorado and South Dakota's state colleges. In 1968 the Tribe contracted with the University of Colorado to provide the training component of a New Careers Training Program funded by the Department of Labor (Fuller, 1971; Smith, 1973b). According to Gerald One Feather in a recent conversation, two hundred colleges had been asked to submit bids and the University of Colorado was one of three that responded. The Tribe thus had a relationship which brought personnel from the university to the reservation and gave tribal members an opportunity to size them up. Seeing the university was serious about helping empower the OST to run its own programs, an additional link was forged with the adoption of a joint program through Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). The program involved bringing professors to the reservation weekly to teach students living in eight villages around the reservation and teamed with local Native VISTA's (Pinto, 1993; Smith, 1973c). The college students worked with the local volunteers and on their own to provide high school equivalency courses, alternative learning centers for youth, crafts and quilt cooperatives for community members, and advocacy on a variety of issues. These two programs

gave tribal leaders a chance to "bootleg" a college onto the reservation. Something they had wanted for several years.

Tribal Chairman (1970-72) Gerald One Feather used the term "bootleg" for characterizing how courses obtained for specific limited programs and purposes were put together into the facsimile of a college through the Lakota Higher Education Center. The taint of illegitimacy he invokes has several connotations. First and foremost, it proclaims ownership by the indigenous people. They counted coup on the dominant society and obtained something they were not supposed to have. This was accomplished by creatively taking personnel and training funds from several programs and putting them together in one entity. Once it was a fact on the ground, they applied for more direct funding. More importantly, it was an entity flying in the face of resistance from the state colleges and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These agencies felt there were plenty of opportunities for college level students to attend away from the reservation. Indeed, the attitude of termination and relocation still predominated in the Bureau at the time (cf., Smith, 1973a). Indeed, courses had been offered on the reservation during the sixties by state colleges but they were graduate courses primarily for Bureau employees to upgrade their credentials.

The VISTA program teamed with the New Careers program under the direction of Birgil Kills Straight by offering courses throughout the reservation in spring 1970. Courses the university delivered for New Careers Trainees were opened to other people across the reservation. Graduates of the VISTA tutoring programs were eager students as were para-professionals in the BIA schools. Courses were offered in log cabins, in community centers, and in some of the Bureau schools. In one case courses were centered at an abandoned "potato cellar." Students who finished were registered at the end of the semester with the University of Colorado. The Colorado computer called the reservation "Campus Number Nine." These courses were all introductory sociology and were taught by the program coordinator Dowell Smith and by selected Vista/Master's Degree candidates such as Stephen Langley and Gene Starbuck in Kyle, and Barb Jones in Oglala.

Meanwhile, the Master's Candidates were working with local Master Tutors and meeting with professors from Boulder. From the sociology department Leonard Pinto was the coordinator and taught graduate courses concerning the sociology of education, Ed Rose taught the history of social thought and ethnoinquiry (cf. 1993b, 1993c). Outside of sociology, Professor David Hawkins (Physics and Philosophy) and his wife Frannie helped conceptualize and implement alternative learning centers in various communities (Smith, 1977; Pinto, 1993). Jeanne Smith functioned initially as one of the field coordinators of the VISTA project and taught a whole language approach to basic language instruction. In the spring of 1970 she went to work full time for New Careers and coordinated the college program there. Later on others came from sociology, the school of education, from anthropology and from other arts and sciences departments.

The University of Colorado VISTA program proceeded independent from, parallel to, and in a dynamic tension with the Lakota Higher Education Center. That is, the university faculty did not teach for the Center but the Master's candidates did. Also, the influence of various faculty involved with the reservation was helpful in navigating the shoals of university politics for the fledgling Center. However no deep connections to the reservation were developed on the part of these faculty although Pinto did bring his family and stay in Manderson for a semester.

In the summer of 1970 New Careers now under the direction of Calvin Jumping Bull offered a full slate of courses in four locations on the reservation. These courses were from Black Hills State College in Spearfish, South Dakota, as well as from Colorado. Former state legislator Robert Kelly indicated in 1978 that he and other legislators pushed state colleges to get involved when they saw the University of Colorado receiving grants and contracts for their work (private conversation). Two people affiliated with VISTA and New Careers--Jeanne Smith and Leonard Librande--coordinated the schedule, registration, and record keeping. At the University of Colorado programs funded in the Sociology Department under the sponsorship of Howard Higman and his assistant Robert Hunter supported the

programs with assistance from Pat Fuller and Tom Bird who had both spent considerable time on the reservation.

In the fall of 1970 the Oglala Sioux Tribe received seed monies for a more formalized Lakota Higher Education Center, hired several staff and set up an interim board. Two of those staff--Anthony J. Fresquez and Evelyn Eaglebull--still work in key positions at the college as does Jeanne Smith who trained them through a position delegated from New Careers. Jim Hamm, a former scholastic at Holy Rosary Mission near Pine Ridge Village returned from teaching at Navaho Community College and took over coordination and fund raising for the One Feather administration in the fall of 1970. He gradually shifted emphasis to Black Hills State College. He completed this move in 1972 when the new Tribal Chair, Dick Wilson, moved to distance his administration from the University of Colorado which he identified with the One Feather administration. Indeed, UC President Frederick Thieme had given the keynote address at the One Feather inauguration in 1970.

Political conflicts within the tribe eventually erupted in armed confrontation at Wounded Knee in 1973 with the American Indian Movement up front on one side, the Wilson administration on the other and Federal Marshalls in between (cf., Roos et al., 1980; Matthiessen, 1983; Burnette and Koster, 1974;). In this atmosphere the University of Colorado VISTA project was asked to leave. At least six of the Colorado students stayed on for several years along with various friends they had recruited. Wally Gallacher, Tom Casey and Susan Craig came to work for and play key roles in the development of the college. Jeanne Smith and her husband Dowell left for a position at a private liberal arts college in Michigan from 1972-77. They returned annually and brought Michigan students to stay with Oglala Lakota families several summers while they taught summer school for the LHEC. They returned in 1977 to work under the ongoing college presidency of Tom Shortbull (1974-1979). Stephen Langley edited the Shannon County News, wrote grants for Little Wound School, and built several innovative programs before his death in 1981.

The Lakota Higher Education Center enrolled over one hundred and eighty students in the summer of 1970. Enrollments climbed to over two hundred and fifty the next year and fluctuated from there to around three hundred and fifty for most of the decade. Robert Gay summarized developments from there in the college self study (1992b):

In 1978, the Board of Trustees was restructured to provide representation in each of the nine districts. Three members were appointed as representatives of the Tribal Council, thus changing the membership to twelve. LHEC also underwent a name change and became Oglala Sioux Community College (OSCC). After operating under the auspices of BHSC, the College began to receive requests from former students for coursework beyond the associate level...The OSCC Board of Trustees and Administration, realized they must obtain accreditation to achieve the autonomy and freedom they needed to offer courses important to the survival of the Lakota people.

In 1979, the College was granted Candidacy Status. In 1980, the administration moved to a new building located seven miles southwest of Kyle. This building was named Piya Wiconi, translated as "new life" or "new beginning." In 1983, the college was granted accreditation at the Bachelor level in Education and Associate level in Education, Human Services, General Studies, Nursing, Lakota Studies, and Business.

At the 1983 annual retreat, OSCC underwent another name change to Oglala Lakota College. It was felt the word "Sioux" was derogatory to Lakota people. "Sioux" is a word derived from the Chippewa language meaning "snake" or "lesser adder". In the spring of 1984, the College requested approval for the Bachelor of Science Degree in Human Services. Approval was granted on June 22, 1984. In that same year the Board and Administration adopted Lakota language as the official language of the College. In 1985 further accreditation at the four year level was acquired by the addition of a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business with an emphasis in Tribal Management. In 1986, OLC became the first Indian Controlled College to offer an accredited nursing program on a reservation.

In October 1987, the College received a 5 year visit from a North Central Team...Stipulations on Bachelors degrees were removed and the College was granted continued accreditation. In 1990, a four year degree in Lakota Studies was adopted by the College. OLC is also approved to offer a limited number of graduate courses.

Following the North Central Association for Schools and Colleges Team visit in the spring of 1993, the college was given tentative approval to offer an accredited Master's Degree in Tribal Leadership and Management. A substantial program in support of the degree development had been provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and

was called "Managers as Warriors." As part of the curriculum development project the college contracted with the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard to prepare six detailed teaching case studies of significant reservation developments and to train OLC staff to publish such case studies in the future.

The college has ongoing cooperative agreements with other tribal colleges, with the University of Wisconsin, the University of Bonn Germany, and occasionally with regional colleges. All such agreements are entered into in line with the college's mission and purposes and its statement of goals and purposes which play a major role in the day to day operations of the college. They are as follows:

Mission Statement: The mission and purposes of the College have been developed from the Oglala Sioux Tribal Ordinance 71- 01 which authorized the charter for the College. The mission is : "To establish and to operate post secondary institutions on the reservation granting certificates and degrees. This mission includes a diverse range of education from community service offerings to graduate degrees. The College will coordinate and regulate all higher education on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The ultimate goal is the establishment of a Lakota University.

"Purpose: In carrying out the mission, the Oglala Lakota College Board of Trustees stresses the importance of maintaining the Lakota culture and fostering tribal self determination. College students need preparation which will enable them to understand the ways of the larger society, as well as the customs and beliefs of the Lakota people. The College, in working toward these ends, has defined its purposes:

Tribal

1. To provide the Oglala Sioux Tribe as a sovereign people, with educated and trained human resources and personnel.
2. To assist people in being active, productive members of their families, communities and the Oglala Sioux Tribe.
3. To provide the Oglala Sioux Tribe with expertise and information needed for its development.
4. To actively seek to place graduates.

Cultural

5. To present the Lakota cultural perspective in teaching within the academic, occupational and community programs.
6. To promote study of the Lakota culture as an area of study in itself.
7. To research, study and disseminate the Lakota language, culture and philosophy.

Academic

8. To maintain high academic standards for staff and students.
9. To maintain open enrollments.

10. To be accessible to potential students.
11. To teach students necessary skills and human values which will assist them in fulfilling themselves and making a productive living.
12. To work with other institutions and agencies in furthering the interests of the College.

Community

13. To assist with the determination of development needs of the reservation districts and communities.
14. To assist the reservation districts and communities in furthering their goals.
15. To provide continuing and community education.
16. To provide a sound, basic education for high school equivalency students.

The current college President, Elgin Bad Wound, returned to the college in 1990 after leaving to complete a doctorate at Pennsylvania State University. He previously served as a tutor, as center director, as Vice President for Instruction, and then as Executive Vice President for Community Services and Student Development. Then, in 1979 he took over from Shortbull as President and served until 1987. He has been concerned in his research and administrations with the cultural integrity of Tribally Controlled Colleges - OLC was the second and there are now twenty eight tribal colleges. His paper "Teaching to Empower: Curricular Aspects of Tribal Leadership and Self Determination," (1991) concludes that "the curriculum of tribal colleges plays a crucial role in the struggle for tribal self determination." He goes on to say,

To construct a curriculum that provides for effective tribal leadership and hence for tribal self determination, we must reorient our thinking toward the view of the curriculum as a means of empowerment. Accordingly, we must devise curricular strategies that enable us to overcome, rather than remain entrapped by the obstacles that currently impede the development of effective teaching strategies."

Conclusion

The college, then, has a history and its leadership has a vision of moving beyond that history. Our task here is to look closely at how various people in the life at Pine Ridge view, have experienced and interpret that history.

The first chapter below deals with conceptions of poverty as a phenomenon in itself. Over the four years of the research fifty interviews were held specifically on this subject. Seventeen of these were tape recorded

and transcribed as representative. In addition several questionnaires were used with selected populations and will be explained as we encounter them below. We will also present a detailed analysis of the current situation of former graduates as of 1992 and brief statements from phone interviews with twenty of them will be presented in whole.

In conducting interviews we found that when we opened with discussions of the college we received mostly accolades and a form of abstract praise with a reluctance to focus on problems and possibilities. People felt strongly that the college was making a difference in poverty but when pressed to give examples or tell us more about what they meant they would just say, "Well-- You know." Consequently we went to talking about poverty first and then to talk about the college role in a poverty situation. As indicated earlier, we found some cultural differences in the meanings and interpretations of poverty that then hold implications for the role of the college.

We came to open our interviews with a request for people to reflect and comment on (interpret) the fact that Shannon County was once again reported to be the poorest by the Bureau of the Census. It has been suggested we call this a form of "ethnostatistics" (Driesen, 1993). At any rate, in the course of talking from this gloss, people tended to comment not only about what poverty was and its causes and consequences--all things grouped in the next chapter--but also about culture. Selected commentaries about culture are thus highlighted in the third chapter.

The college will be the subject of the fourth chapter. This next chapter includes summaries of the data presented in Appendix A and graduates comments about their experiences with and as a result of the college. The final chapter presents a summary and suggestions for carrying on the work of teaching and research in this mileaux.



Chapter 2: Commentaries on Poverty

(C) Dowell Smith, editor

Introduction. This project began in 1989 with an idea of investigating effects Oglala Lakota College has on economic poverty of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The main portion of the reservation had been designated the "poorest county in the United States" by the Census in 1980 and we were interested in what impact the college might have had in a decade. I was naive on at least two important dimensions. First, relationships between education and economic developments while seemingly straight forward in a social science sense "are generally unknown and are extraordinarily complicated" (Vaizey, 1971). Second, the meaning of "poverty" itself is a subject of no little contention in the reservation life world as well as in the world of "social science" (cf., Covella, 1980; Jones, 1984; Thurow, 1972; Beeghley, 1984; Brint and Karobel, 1989; Waxman, 1983)

Finding my moorings slipping, I began to cast about in search of the meanings given poverty by various people on the reservation. "Again in 1990 the Census found that Shannon County has the most families under the poverty level in America. What does that mean to you?" This finding of the Census was in the local newspapers and on television and radio news. Consequently most people had already done some thinking about the topic. Everyone who was interviewed began talking without further prompting and most follow up questions were prompts to, "Tell me more about that!"

Commentaries are presented in this chapter pointing towards features of life being lived and perceived in this economically lean corner of the world. As will be seen, the meanings given poverty vary tremendously. There is no public consensus of what to make of

poverty. Indeed, as with many of the tribal cultures engulfed by the tide of European expansion over the past two centuries, people here embody a counter culture opposed to the invaders meanings, honor a warrior culture of resistance, as well as a more traditional culture that thrived on the wealth of the plains--not only the vast herds of buffalo but a wide variety of game, fruits and vegetables.

These commentaries may seem at first to wander and indeed, given the open nature of the interviews they do. However, the careful reader will find themes emerging and threading among the various commentaries. Some of these threads are discussed in the conclusion. Each person, then, presents an important facet of the phenomenon we are concerned with which is glossed over in everyday talk with the word "poverty." Much as Plato pictures Socrates teasing out various meanings of "justice" over several volumes of dialogue, our commentators each offers an important perspective for consideration. Taken together the threads of these conversations begin to paint a picture of the whole system of ideas about poverty.

The Commentaries.

Burt Kaline was an elementary school teacher at Little Wound School over the past year (1992-93). He is married to an Oglala woman from Manderson who speaks Lakota and they are the parents of five school age children. He is interviewed here by his wife, Martyna (who also transcribed most of the interviews in the study).

Poverty and self esteem and the way you act and think--some of it is determined by how much poverty there is in the community. In terms of my life, as I was growing up I know that we did not have everything. We did not have all the clothing or we did not have a good running car or things that are considered to be luxuries in a home--things that are used by a family who is considered to be financially well off. Back home in Montana the way I felt as I was growing up, I always had food.

As a Northern Cheyenne I was always being talked to in my language. Everything was done in accordance to Cheyenne beliefs and Cheyenne spirituality. There was explanations behind why I was doing things and why I was learning things through my parents or through my grandparents. All of them took the time to explain what a young man is suppose to be doing or what a young woman is suppose to be doing in the Northern Cheyenne culture. I used to attend sweats that my grandfather would put on and many different people would come and sweat. Or the Native American Church--which my parents and my grandparents belong to-- They used to have those time to time and they taught us how to put up the tipi and how to fix the wood, which way the tipi is suppose to face-- all those little, minute details that you're suppose to know that are being taught to you while you're growing up. .

All this to me was rich. I was rich in culture, language, spirituality. I didn't think in my mind that I was in a poverty level home with regards to what the white people say. And to their standards I was probably was a poverty level child living in a poverty level family in a poverty level community but, in my eyes I was happy. I was rich in culture like I stated before and language, spirituality. I didn't have any worries, no frustrations of any kind. I could speak my mind just the way I wanted to in my language.

.....

Well, I've come to know the two worlds. The Northern Cheyenne world and the White world and now a third world, Lakota. When I look at my tribe, there's quite a few jobs available, there's quite a bit of housing available. But, I think we're still considered at poverty level according to the white people's standards. But in my mind, I think that we're at the middle level income--if we're talking about economic levels of poverty. Here in South Dakota, in terms of economic poverty, I think you are at a low point in having no jobs or no housing available, no businesses around. It is at a low level in terms of using the white man's level of income--economic income.

.....

My grandparents told me to get a good education, to learn the English language. "Sing their English songs," my grandfather used to say. "Learn their songs. That way you'll have a good education and you'll get a good job in time to come," he said. But, just like you said, they never mentioned poverty. I didn't know what poverty was. I was rich in language. My grandfather used to tell us stories. My grandmother used to tell me beliefs of the Cheyenne people, the superstitions, how to talk to elderly people, how to treat elderly people. I was learning all those things.

I didn't have time to think of myself as a no income, poverty level, Native American living in a low income, poverty level community, living with low income, poverty level parents or grandparents. I never heard any of that.

Then all of a sudden I start hearing things and I know that that's because it's the white man's way of looking at things--through the amount of money and family size. I know that some people--they don't work--and I wonder how they're able to judge them. There's some people that work but they have large families. How do they judge those people. All of this is white, middle class, protestant, ideas. That's what all this school systems go under, too. When they use their testing--their end of the year testing--they're using white, middle class, and mostly likely protestant tests and those are totally culturally irrelevant. Then the federal government says the Native Americans can't do good on these tests because they score low. Of course, it's not from their culture. So there's one of the differences there.

This idea of poverty was started by the white people. It's just another form of oppression to the Native American. Another form to keep us Native Americans from thinking of ourselves as being some one, as being a human. Another way to make us feel bad, feel bad about being a Native American, feel bad about using our Native American languages and our Native American spirituality ceremonies. It's just another way to focus, downgrade our society, our lifestyle. They don't want to realize that we're a whole different society from them.

We're a society. We're rich in kinships. We're rich in language. We're rich in crafts, lore. We have people who do good art crafts. We have people who can talk very good in the Indian language. We have people who can cure people--Native American medicine men who can cure Cancer, Diabetes. I was rich when I was growing up--not in terms of money wise. The way we're being manipulated by the capitalistic government of the United States. I'm not really a militant or any thing like that but that's how I would describe it. I also have to watch how I say things because the next--I might be blackballed from the next place of employment. We have people who can do the fancy dance or the jingle dress--experts in that area, people who are inclined musically. For instance: Jackie Bird or any others. Vince Two Eagle. Paul Ortega. And then we have the singing groups--different singing groups who can sing round dance songs and make everybody dance. Or we have good handgame people who can hide them colored beaded bones and you can never find them. There's people who are very good at that.

Just like I said, we're a whole unique society and they just can't see that. They just don't want to see it and so they start making statistics about it saying poverty, low income, low income family, any thing that will make it low, that's what they're using. I don't think there's very much poverty on any reservations come to think of it. It's just the stereotype that the people put on us. **Whoever came up with the word poverty?**

While this first commentary discounts economic poverty except as an ideological weapon of the dominant society, the next interview suggests that there is a poverty of spirituality. He suggests that spirituality like the above commentator grew up with would enable people to deal effectively with the economic situation. Like Glaucon's definition of justice in Plato's Thrasymachus, this commentator begins with the individual's own characteristics as the key to understanding. Later when he talks of a "culture of poverty" he refers primarily to the individuals need for security in a given setting. And, he ends

up talking about the characteristics of individual politicians as an important influence.

CHARLIE STEWART is a social worker with the Human Service (formerly Mental Health) program of the Indian Health Service in Pine Ridge. He is a tribal member who attended college through a Master's degree off the reservation. He is interviewed by Martyna Kaline.

I guess the core of what I would say will be the **problem of poverty here would be probably spiritual poverty** because a person's motivations or a person's spirituality or this person's personality or their core, their soul is--it all depends on how that soul is. If that soul is happy then there's some good things that occur. But if they're depressed or if they're not feeling good then they don't have the drive or the energy, the motivation to do things. So there's less productivity with less spirituality. And so to me the foundation of all of this is spirituality.

Basically, I guess we're sometimes--the **Mental Health Program** is sometimes--referred to as a science program and we use theories to help people resolve problems. But the traditional way, the Native American way, is that not only do you use those good things--the science or theories or those kinds of things--you respect those things but basically you're looking at traditional and spiritual things, looking at holistic kinds of things.

So to me a person's well being depends upon how well **they're feeling inside themselves** and they have greater productivity in their home, their family, their relationships, in their job, employment, social relationship, extended family relationships, community relationships, tribal relationships based upon how well they're feeling inside of themselves.

To me the **poverty is really different to other cultures** here in the United States and Canada and even in Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe is really kind of different. I've seen a lot of poverty. Yet, I've seen a lot of poorer people who I guess make use of their resources that they have. It kind of reminds me of when Hitler--

Toward the end of his war when he was losing the battle financially-- They didn't have the right tires for the right trucks, the right equipment for their road machines. So I've seen pictures of some of these trucks and armament and armored vehicles--war vehicles--that had different sizes of wheels, windows and things kind of pasted on. To me that kind of represents what Eastern Europe is. They do a lot of that. They make their vehicles look real tidy even though they don't have the new tires or the new equipment to replace something.

In the United States when something gets a little worn people tend to replace it with a new object, a new thing. Here on the reservation it seems to be that we try to make use of the resources that are left standing. For instance, old vehicles that are still about. People will hang on to those because there's some value in them that if they happen to buy a car they might be able to use parts off the old car to keep their newer car running. So consequently we have the same thing happen where people are regenerating those old products for their benefit. On the other hand, you have people here--few people in the community--who have some sort of resource to buy equipment, buy vehicles, and a lot of these are new.

There's some other phenomena that maybe even similar among the black cultures down South. One of the phenomena that I saw was there may be a Cadillac in the driveway and a color TV inside an old shack or shanty or shacks that the blacks would live in--that their house was in shambles, or their shack was in shambles. But yet they had a Cadillac and like a color TV. So here when someone says-

You find where people are always having to measure themselves up to the television--what comes across on television. They got to wear the right kinds of clothes. They got to drive the right kind of car, motorcycle. They got to be shampooing with the right kind of shampoo. So you have people having to measure up to standards that are coming across television and there's a real disparity in what Indian people are able to do--that they're trying to save their resources to obtain some of these things

to wear, to drive, or to live with. Some times you find people with some real expensive items but its incongruent with some of the other things that they have or they live in.--

Like they live in poverty but they may have a boom box. They might have \$130 tennis shoes but they don't have much to eat at home. So there's a lot of trying to own up or measure up to some of these standards that come across the TV.

To me there's another phenomena that occurs too and that is, its call--**what I call the culture of poverty**. It seems that when people live in such a life for so long they become accustomed to it--that they're familiar with it that they are-- If they were to be removed from that they would feel very anxious and probably afraid or paranoid. You see a lot of that with the mental health patients that come through our program that-- If they lived in a certain way of life before that, they don't want to be removed or remove themselves or change from that way of life because they're really comfortable with that. And sometimes that means wives don't want to leave their husbands or their significant others if the husband or the significant other's beating on them.

They prefer to have the relationship or whatever those kinds of things that come from such a relationship that gives them **security**. They don't want to leave that. They don't want to be alone. They don't want to have anything change for them so it's hard for them to change from that. A good example of what this is too--material wise--is if any of the people here--one of the people in the community--wins the lottery. Let's say they win \$50,000. They're most likely going to be ending back up to what their lifestyle was before they won the \$50,000. That money would most likely be spend within a short period of time and then they'll be back into their situation.

And the other society or other culture they might say they should of made an advantage or done something with the \$50,000 to bring themselves out of poverty. But, that's their perspective. They see what they think they can do with all that \$50,000 as opposed to what it's like for the person who actually won the \$50,000 and has to live with their relatives or live in the community that they live in

and have to give loans, give out money, or to be accepted or be part of the community-- That they most likely would go back to that same standard of living or way of life that they lived before they got the \$50,000.

So it's sort of like that, that culture of poverty that people prefer to stay where they're at because the change to a different level would disrupt their lifestyle and disrupt their security and make them paranoid. So it's something that we work with here.

I don't think this is a phenomenon only with our people here but I think this is phenomena with all different cultures and all different peoples. An experience that I had about fifteen years ago was I knew a fellow who worked for the Bureau and he had some data that I didn't have access to but he showed me some data and--

So I think that if there's any research to be done, that would be to check with the General Assistance Program-- But there seem to be some data that he had that showed that 90% of the people that were in a given community--let's say Porcupine--were under general assistance or receiving funds from General Assistance and about 10% or less were actually had their own income from a job or from another source.

So basically those folks are on ADC, General Assistance, Social Security. So that was really quite a phenomena, phenomenal figure regarding one of our communities. The other thing is that according to sociologists and those studies and the government that all of these supplemental funds whether its ADC, Social Security, or any other resources they're all at survival levels. They're not designed to provide the full benefit of what you get for income and provide for your family.

Those income levels are set at survival levels and so to rely upon a income level or resource that is at a survival level does not make it possible for any one to exceed or to improve or to better their life. It's totally impossible to do that based upon the survival level that these income--that these people receive. So really nobody can improve their lifestyle on this type of income. It's totally impossible. You might find people who are bartering their food

stamps or their commodities for other kinds of things that they need. Some times people have to hire people to take them into town for health care, to go into business offices, or agency offices--that sort of things. So people are using sometimes their survival level income or resources to provide for some other kinds of things that they don't have the funds to do it. So again they're backtracking, they're going backwards as far as trying to improve their lives. This is kind of an ongoing kind of a thing.

I think in the year 2000 we're going to find the same indicator that Shannon County is the poorest county in the United States again because of the way the system is and the way the system will be.

Also related to this poverty wise and eligibility wise is two different programs-- Is that we find people who are literally getting **divorces** not because they don't like each other but because it's economically feasible--more economically feasible--to be living together as significant others than to be married together. Because then living together makes them eligible for certain programs and certain resources that if they were married together they wouldn't be eligible for it.

So you find people who are putting themselves in a situation **just to survive** in our societies. I think that's a real significant situation on the tribe too--in our communities.

Again **basically we're looking at spirituality** as the foundation for all of this. We feel that there's a resurgence back to traditional ways and to spirituality now--than there has been. But at what rate or progress that is depends upon the local people and what they want to do for themselves.

There isn't any real effort upon anybody's part to go after to train or improve people's spirituality. Basically, people are doing that on their own. But I think that to improve the economy or to improve the poverty level, people would have to get back into the spirituality, or get into spirituality because what that'll mean also is **tha--like in the old days--**

I think there's still some things that are going on politically--is that **when the U.S. government made chiefs**. Instead of the

traditional chiefs that the Indian people relied upon, they made chiefs that they could go to and then they could be policy makers--rely upon those men that the U.S. government made as chiefs. Then they provided for those chiefs. They gave them houses, they gave them rations. They allowed them certain benefits and they allowed them to travel to Washington D.C.--which was really a favorite pass time for a lot of those people back in the late 1800's.

So when these made chiefs-- When they had all of these things-- They had resources and they had power in the community because they were given things. They had resources to give away. They had more things. They were more powerful than the government agency workers-- Or the agents then listened to these people because they were men designated--made chiefs. So they had to relate to them or had to communicate with them. So what this did is it **created further problems for our day** where we're having to kind of live with the same kind of situation where people are all in a different way sort of--

Politically if a program receives some funds through some grant or entitlement or through contract, or through some beneficiary, then what they're able to do is to run a program. And what some times happens politically in the tribe is that the tribe will-- Some other programs will want to jump in and take over those programs and then have control over the financial aspects of that program which decimates that program and the money falls into the hands of other people--other than what the mission of that original plan or program was, or the objectives of the original contract or the program that it was designed for. So I think that there are a lot of politicking that people see--if there's some funds or resources available--that will find people that are going to be doing that.

You'll also find that there are people--maybe it's a little better today--but years past you find people who are alcoholic and--maybe even people today--**who're alcoholic and on drugs** that their spirituality isn't in the proper places and--

So even if they are alcoholic and maybe if they were using drugs--and let's say they were--they seem to be spiritual. They're

still suspect because of the drug usage and because of the alcohol usage and so there's always a question as to what is their intent in regard to these resources that come to the reservation. Does these resources-- Do these contract, consultation type of funds that fall into their hands-- There's some side benefit to that-- That they become consultants to a beneficiary and then a lot of the resources go to that person's pockets rather than to what the objectives of what the beneficiary intends to do or what the statistics or the poverty need or the need is on the reservation--whatever those needs are. **All of those resources don't go to meet that need.** Some of them fall into other persons' pockets.

So basically we're looking at spirituality. We're looking at honesty, truthfulness. We're looking at standards of life. How people feel about themselves. How they take care of themselves. How they take care of their loved ones. How respectful they are to the traditions and to their own values and how they relate to each other. So a lot of this has to do with spirituality.

In the next interview the commentator explains he is not a politician. His focus starts out on the relationship of dependency as the essential dimension of poverty. Again, though, he goes to the reference point of the older generation and how they did not see themselves as poor. Land was the basis of being for the old traditionalists. The land is still there but now people want something more. Growing up he felt he had freedom and lived a simple life in balance where he worked with his family as a "good crew." Moving to the city changed that. They could not seem to "get ahead" and the school required money and good clothes. Whites were not as free and now he resembles them. He feels the need to seek power as described in Casteneda's Don Juan. Then he indicates that Lakota people in his border town community have a feeling of helplessness and abandonment since they have fewer advocates in the system than they once did. Finally he mentions a feeling of oppression as a problem.

BILL CROSS has worked for the South Dakota Department of Social Services in Pine Ridge for over a year. He has a Bachelor's degree from Oglala Lakota College's Human Service program. He has lived on and off the reservation throughout his life. He now lives in the border town of Gordon.

Well, I don't know how to say it in a way that-- I'm not involved in Tribal government or anything like that but, just my own observations. I didn't live on a reservation long. I grew up on a reservation and moved away. But coming back to the reservation again and working there I think I'm beginning to see a lot of things. **I see this thing they call poverty.** I'm not really sure what it is. It's not the same kind of poverty you would find in other areas where in one sense there's plenty and another sense there isn't, you know.

I think it's the fact that we're dependent. Everything seems to be uncertain. We depend on the government. We depend on the assistance. And in that sense it does make us seem poor.

You could have an adequate income--whatever--whether it be through assistance-- But the fact that you're on some kind of assistance-- You do get the feel of being poor and living in poverty. I was on G.A. for awhile. I survived on that for about a year. It was adequate to meet my needs but I thought I had other needs too.. Head for White Clay. Make that money. Go around to things that I really didn't need. I thought they were needs then but we had food, water, shelter. We had a car. We had gas. **We had basic necessities.**

We did grow gardens--stuff like that--and everything was alright. I really don't know how to explain it but-- **I guess it's more of a feeling.** It seems like if everybody was working and making the same amount of money they're making right now-- minimum wage or something like that--I think we'd still be considered poor. We'll still consider ourselves poor. Like I was saying earlier, **to me poverty is like if you want what everybody else has and don't have it, then you feel poor or without.**

You look at our young people today. You see a lot of them, the things they want, the things they have, the things they think they should have-- And the old people see that and they don't like it. They go back to their days and they say, 'when we were young we played with this and that or we didn't need this or didn't need that. We did without all this. We were happy.' I guess a lot of old people would talk about poverty in a different way, in that sense--what they did without and yet what they had and what they were grateful for and how healthy they were and how they survived.

They didn't see themselves as poor. Being a traditional I guess you would kind of look at the land--environment--first before you look at material stuff. That's how you'd measure your poverty, you know. Land always comes first. You might be living in a log house surrounded by land. Acres and acres of land and you don't consider yourself poor.

Today that land is still there but, we want something else. We want what the dominant society has. We see it in the cities. We see it on TV. Our kids especially. They want all that. They think they must have it or they rebel or they react. My dad is an elder. He talks about these things a lot--how they did without and what it meant to them, what their parents taught them about material possessions and stuff like that. When you did have something, you hung on to it, you took care of it, you polished it.

I never did think I was in poverty when I was growing up. In fact, my freedom-- I guess my lifestyle then made me a rich person. Then I came off the reservation and seen what other people were doing and not doing and couldn't do. Then I felt fortunate. I moved into an off reservation town and that's the first thing I saw is what the kids weren't able to do--what they never experienced.

I took some of that with me when I went to towns and I didn't fit in. I guess you'd say, wild Indian, dirty little Indian because we were always barefoot and people saw us as not having shoes or something but that's how we grew up. You know. We liked it. We never wore shoes when we were kids. We liked playing that way. Going without shirts. You never saw the kids doing that. They all had t-shirts on and caps and tennis shoes and

we went without shirt and shoes. Then we look at them and think they didn't have this. They don't know this freedom, this feeling. Their parents probably don't too.

So in that sense we were better off and we felt fortunate then. I never thought I was poor. In those sense I didn't think I was poor. The things that I experienced, witnessed, learned. I took that with me when I went off the reservation. I felt above everybody else.

Especially now-- I grew and I see other cultures--Africans, and things like that . And I say, 'I know that feeling--being wild and being free. Running through the bushes with no shoes on ' I couldn't do that now. Kids today couldn't do that. We swum in water. Today I would have to make sure that there's no rocks, no sticks, no snakes. I wouldn't even go near it right now. Those things--we were one.

It seems like we were equal to everything--in balance. We live in a place where there's a lot of rattlesnakes--things like that--and they never bothered us. Today I think about those things and when I see them I just about freak out. I can't imagine how at one time we were just carefree of those things. I guess you can say in a sense we're poor but, we didn't see it that way.

Talking about our diet and stuff like that, very simple. Very simple food. Lot of corn. You'd be surprised how many different ways a corn could be used to prepare one meal consisting of corn prepared in different ways. It was a meal along with wild cherries that were dried for the winter--a whole winter. Different kinds of roots. Turnips., two different kinds of turnips and tree bark tea and things like that--rose hips tea.

It was a natural thing. It seemed to be a natural thing when those times came, like fall. We knew what to do. It never was a chore or looking at ourselves as we're so damn poor that we have to do this. It was just a natural thing. The whole family went up in the hills in the summer time for turnips. We all did our work and came back with thousands and thousands of them and dried them-- Cherries--

We all pitched in and did that. Most of the time my father wasn't there but, my mother and there was nine of us kids so she

had a good work crew. We never did look at that as poverty--being poor, or unfortunate--isolated, yeah. We knew we were isolated but, so were a lot of people at that time...

That time lot of conveniences that we have today were not there. Electricity was--just a few people had it. Running water--the water was hand pumped. Roads-- There really was no roads. You just went through the hills on horse or in a wagon or whatever kind of car there was. I don't remember too much the 40's. 50's. That's when I remember a lot--growing up.

Then moving to the city, that's where I began to see poverty because we worked just as hard trying to maintain a home but we weren't getting any where. You'd seem to always be needing something or not having something cause we want it more. House, electricity-- Next thing you know we want a TV. We want this and that. Then the school had demands on us, too. We had to pay this and pay that, have this kind of clothes. That's where we began to get that feeling of being in poverty, being poor. We saw a difference, a big difference.

...

I'm,not really saying poverty is okay. It does exist. There are needs but, it depends on how we use it. We can use it or we can let it destroy us. I guess that's pretty much what I'm saying. Since we have nothing, we shouldn't want anything. We should focus on something greater. Right now to me that's the pursuit of power. There's nothing more worthy of our manhood than to pursue power. There's nothing more worthy in life than to have that task of being a hunter of power, great hunter of power. It sounds romantic and all that but, it's not. It's very basic.

.....

We learned to feel helpless. If something happens today, I'm not sure where I would go for help. At one time I knew exactly where to go. The people living here--the Indian people--they're totally helpless. They have no where to go so they'll seek somebody who they think would do something for them. Sometimes they would come to me. They'll tell me about a complaint they have. It's usually on the police kicking down their door--things like that--with

no warrants. But, from there I don't know where to take it. But they just don't know how to pursue it from there.

Once they give it to you then they think that's it. -- you'll do something about it. They hope that you will and they leave. I'm not sure where to go from there. Sometimes there's no where to go. Take it one place and it might die right there. They'll say they'll look into it and time goes on and on and nothing's done. So in that way, we can feel that resources are lacking. They were here one time and they're gone and we feel more alone and more helpless.

...That's what contributed to this feeling of helplessness. All these things were taken away. Indian Commission--they don't respond any more the way they used to. They used to have a local representative and he was always checking on us down here--coming down and asking us how things were going.

He made his presence known, too. When he came down he'd go down and see the City Manager and talk with him. Chief of Police-- Everybody thought that was pretty good. He had a lot of courage to do that. Then they cut that out. Now we don't even have a local representative.

...

I think we're struggling, striving too much to just go out and be like the dominant society in every sense. That's part of our poverty we call it oppression. Whatever-- But my thoughts on that are probably far fetched and way out.

The next commentator picks up on the theme of historical oppression--something she has heard referred to as "historical grief"--and links it to dysfunctional behaviors of those people like her who have lived on welfare over generations. Here we find someone linking personal behaviors to the family and the family behaviors to the policies and actions of the federal government. Economic poverty may accentuate these problems but it did not cause them. In the end she expresses hope for change and recovery in a few generations.

Shirley Brewer is a counselor for a program at Pine Ridge High School. She has a Master's degree and most of her coursework for a doctorate in higher education at the University of South Dakota. She served for several years as an instructor and program director at OLC. She left the college in 1990 after serving six months as acting president during troubled times.

I think all of it goes back to what happened historically. I guess the main factor--the factor that I came out with, that I felt had the greatest impact on the Indian people--was the destruction of the Indian family. I would look at the different behaviors of the people, including myself and my relatives as far as how the family situation operates. I was thinking, why do people treat their kids like that? How long is it like this?

But, anyhow I'd start thinking back to the **boarding schools.** I just looked at my own family and I know for sure I'm a third generation boarding school product. So for nine months out of the year I was away from home. I wasn't around my mom that much and so I guess I missed out on a lot of the parenting practices. -- until I got to looking at her and wondering where her parenting practices came from. Because I didn't think they were that great either. I looked at my grandmother and they both were boarding school products. I don't know how far back that goes in my family but I know its at least three generations.

I was thinking my grandmother got her whatever it was she **learned about parenting from boarding school--catholic** boarding school in her case. In my mom's situation: catholic boarding school and government boarding school. And so that helped me kind of come to an understanding of some things I guess. And thinking back on how-- Where you had to have your kids in school and hold back the rations and back then they kept them in school for about 11 - 12 months out of the year. There was some things that my mom shared with me that my grandmother had done. And it was really confusing for me.

And I got to thinking about how I was treated in boarding school--some of the covert messages that I got about my family. And this was in the 60's and early 70's. And there was a lot of things that changed for the better at that point--by then. As I was thinking, what kind of messages did they get in my mom's day or my grandmother's day? And I guess I could understand some of the practices she did in her parenting with her kids. Plus the fact that she had 15 kids and her husband died when her youngest twins were four years old. She had to raise those kids by herself.

I guess another thing that has really been hitting home with me is lately--over the past couple of years to three years--was that so many of us don't know a different way. All we know is this poverty cycle, as I call it--feast and famine. We have never been exposed to any other way of life.

As far as education, I use to really get upset with school--different school boards or different articles in the media and stuff--about always saying how--parents--there was no parent participation. And I myself have gotten frustrated with the lack of parent participations in schools or education.

But then, you have to look at that historically--what happened way back when our parents and grandparents take their kids to the school and drop them off and told them to go away until next spring or whatever. "This is our domain. Stay out of it. That isn't only in the educational--

I guess, that applies to just about the whole life system on the reservation. For years and years, the Bureau of Indian Affairs said, "You can do this, you do it this way. You do it at this time. You can't do this."--just really dictated to the people. And that became internalized. It use to really upset me. It didn't upset me. It bothered me when I would see people so fearful to assert themselves and ask a question--to even go into some business place to do something. It still bothers me that people are like that but its something--its not the way they choose to be, I guess. As far as I personally go, I can see where some of that unresolved specific issues has been passed on from my mother to me.

And then there's more general things that I think--different issues that have been passed on to the people. When you do have all this-- I remember when I was in grad school they were talking about adult education and why some people got into adult education. And these people I was in class with were all the white, middle class students. And so they were coming up with all these different reasons why. And basically the most part was all personal growth. Things that would enhance their life. And I just had a real hard time with that. Because I was thinking at home there's so many people that never even get to the point of thinking about personal growth or enhancing their life--as day to day survival. Or kids that aren't having their basic needs met.

It was hard for me to even think in terms of personal growth and enhancing my lifestyle. Because of the dysfunctional system and the damage that has happened, people are still choosing to change the way they feel by different chemicals, alcohol, drugs, eating, whatever. They're doing all kinds of things to change the way they feel right now. I think lot of people just operate from that frame of mind.

Right here and now is what you worry about. You don't worry about later on. Yeah, I think that's true. But the thing is a lot of people don't realize that.-- Don't realize that what their carrying, or that what's going with them, are repercussions of things that happened a long time ago. Like I say, a lot of them are just dealing with basic needs now. Chances are--not going to be in a situation where they're going to be exposed--I guess--to looking at or even looking--the possibilities of the why--what's going on.

...I don't know. I guess, I said-- I still am there in a lot of ways. And what I mean by that is that I'm getting older and I've got a lot self knowledge. And I realize a lot of the things that I need to work on-- And yet here I am, 40 years old and I'm not thinking towards the future. You know--when I can no longer work, retire. I have no savings. I've nothing set aside for them. I still function like that--from payday to payday. Get the bills paid and whatever. Then wait till next payday and start all over again, and not really looking towards-- If something happened where I would have to quit

working-- And there was this thing on TV this morning saying that someone my age should have about \$76,000 saved toward retirement to maintain the lifestyle that they talk about on TV. Of course, my lifestyle is nothing like theirs but, I just thought, well, I'm not going to maintain my lifestyle then.

There was a time when I was unemployed and on ADC. I was about 21 years old then--I guess. I found myself divorced and I had a two year old son and expecting my second child in a matter of months. And I just thought, "Totally hopeless. Is this what my life has come to?" Then I got angry. I guess, something happened. Something kicked in.

And I decided I was going to go back to college and I was going to get a degree because I was responsible for these two kids. I wanted to give them something better than what I had--what I had had growing up. So I did. I went back to school and got a degree. But, its still a struggle.

Just before I went on ADC, I was working. Just by splitting up with my husband-- I was working, I was pregnant, and my husband and I split up. And for the first time in my life I was totally on my own plus responsible for some little ones. I would get paid--I was a Teacher's Aide up at elementary-- I would get paid-- pay the rent, all the basic bills--and I would have about \$20 left to last me two weeks for food or whenever we needed--gas. I don't know if they had food stamps--or I don't know what they had then. But, that's all I knows. I had \$20 to last me two weeks.

I couldn't do it. It's like there was something just growing inside of me. It was like, 'I'm never going to be dependent on anybody for anything. If I can't get it myself, then I'm not going to have it.' Over just the course of those few months, it was growing inside of me.

Then whenever I did have to sign up for welfare, it was just like I decided I was going to go back to college. It was really-- maybe it was just my bullheadedness . Because I had gone to college right out of high school but I flunked out the first semester. And I never had any intentions of going to college because--I had the capabilities--"I was not college material." But when I was

responsible for those two kids-- I just decided, 'I'm going to do it. One way or the other, I'm going to do it.'

I think that based on my own experience, when I was--up until I was about--10 years old, we lived on welfare. My mom was raising us five kids by herself and our only income was ADC. That's all I know--you know--for quite awhile. Every first of the month we got this check and during the school year--if we were lucky--we'd each get a new pair of shoes. And then for the first--maybe--two weeks of the month we had groceries enough. And then the last two weeks it was really tough.

I remember one time my mom-- I think she bought this milk and it was sour but she wasn't assertive enough to take it back to the store. So she tried to make cottage cheese and it was awful. I lived in poverty, I experienced it firsthand, through my formative years. And so that's the only thing I knew.

Then my mom started working and she got married. and our lifestyle changed. But it was still really sheltered.. I didn't know anything about life off the reservation other than White Clay--these little border towns. It wasn't too attractive to me.

I really believe in working with kids. I think a lot of that has to do with-- You get a certain mind frame based on your experiences. That's all you know until somehow your exposed to something different. And that maybe hearing other students in school talk about things--a way of life that is different--where there are people employed in the family, where there are people educated, and there's a different method other than just the social programs.

.....

There's all kinds of consequences. I think that during the time that we were on welfare I picked up a--I don't know what it was, how to describe it, my mom had-- She talked one way and she acted another way.

One thing she'd do was always telling us that you are a first American. Be proud of that. And then she kind of went to the extreme. She said your just as good as those white people, your even better than the white people. She'd verbalize that to us and then her actions showed that she really didn't feel that herself. Maybe when

we were here on the reservation, she did. But, when we got on the border towns--when she had to deal with those white people--you can see the change in her. **It's like her self concept or her own spirit kind of shrunk.**

It has-- Something was happening there. Not only is that a **factor of the racism** that you deal with, but to get prejudice from people because of the fact that you are on welfare. And that again affects your self concept or your self esteem. So I really think that the majority of the people here have a **self esteem problem**. I see a lot of it still. Verbalizing one thing, but when it comes down to it, they haven't internalized what they're saying. They don't really believe it. Their spirit is still real insecure and real shaky.

I had to tell myself and working through all this stuff was-- I had to come to the realization that **it didn't take one generation for us to get to the situation we're in**. In addressing the problems that are with us today, it's going to take time. And that was really hard for me to deal with. Because I remember being a small kid going out to one of the districts one time for some kind of athletic thing. And my mind was thinking, **'Some day I'm going to come back and I'm going to change all this. I'm going to change the way it is.'** And I operated under that--that hope, I guess--for a long time.

What I was thinking though was that it was going to happen in 10 to 20 years. I was going to see where all these good things--these good changes-- I was going to see everything the way I thought it should be. But, after working through this stuff then I realized that it isn't going to happen. Not while I'm here. Not when my kids are here. **But maybe my grandkids and my great grandkids will see a significant change.**

As far as that happening, I think that it has started. There-- for one thing--a major factor-- **A lot of people are in recovery** and are really trying to improve themselves and give whatever they can to other people who might want it. Another positive factor is that those people who aren't recovery and still may make fun of those who are are at least developing awareness. They're hearing a lot of different things through KILI or whatever--the different

workshops that are happening around here. So they're hearing some stuff and they may be aren't agreeing with it but, at least, they're hearing it. I see small parts happening. **That gives me hope. I see things going on..**

The theme of dysfunctional behavior and how it effects her kids is the initial concern of the next commentator. Inaction on these issues leads to depression. Thus, she too is concerned to make some changes. She feels that Lakotas will have to do this for themselves. To do this she feels she will have to work around the factions and personal issues that often interfere with doing things in the community. Things can be done, though, with a positive, healthy attitude.

Rosalie Benson has been a college center director at Manderson for four years. Before that she was a counselor at the center. She also worked for a time in the registrar's office. She is a graduate of OLC in Human Services.

Living right in the middle of Manderson even made me look at the poverty, the alcoholism, the abuse, the realities of life that we have to deal with each day. Then if you let yourself really get in it, you can go into this depressed rut. And so I have to stop. And I have to think, 'There's a reason for all this and there's also a solution to all this'.

One of the things I found was that if I sit idly and just look at everything and just start complaining about it, then I seem to get more depressed. But, if I start doing something in helping to make a change, then I feel okay.

You look at the amount of money that comes on to this reservation, and there's a lot of money that comes here. So then you start looking at, 'If we have so much money coming on to the reservation, why are we in poverty? Why are we considered-- Shannon County--being the poorest county in the United States?' And sometimes I've even heard us compared to places like Third

World countries. And you look at all that. Then you think about all that.

Then you look at the pride that the Indian people have. And probably even in the Third World countries--that--the pride that the people there have in themselves, in the culture, in their religion.

I guess probably this past month has been a month for me--that's been kind of an eye opening time for me. Maybe my age has something to do with it. I don't know. But, its like looking at my daughter who's a junior in high school now and saying, 'I don't want my daughter to have to deal with all this. Not this amount anyway.'

Sure they're going to have problems and stuff. But I want to be able to make a change here for them. So that they can live a good life. Not a struggle. Not constantly having to fight for something or wanting a change and yet not having anybody to listen to them and to help them make that change.

Just this past week we had three deaths within a week. One of our students here--who got killed in a car wreck-- One was a person in Wounded Knee who was beat to death. And just last night we had an eight month old baby who passed away here.

You start thinking about all that and you think, 'there's got to be something we can do. We're from here, we live here. We want our kids to be here. Our roots are here, This is our home and there has to be something we can do. We can't just sit back and continue to have these things happen.' And so you kind of go back and you look at what has been done and why things haven't worked.

And the only thing I can come up with is that it doesn't work because other people are trying to do it. We're not doing it ourselves. Someone comes on to this reservation and, 'This is what needs to be done here to make this place work.' So they try and it fails.

I just have this real strong sense anymore that if there's going to be a change and if we're going to get out of the poverty that they say we're in to, it's something we're going to do ourselves. We need to sit down and we need to say, 'Okay, this is a problem here

and let's get a group of people and see if we can come up with a solution. And let's work at it. And let's get this problem solved.'

I guess one thing that I realize too, though, is that one of the **big problems on the reservation is the factions** that come about within--like even within one district or within the reservation--the political games. And we have everything on this reservation that anyone off the reservation probably has. We have political factions. We have individuals who are feuding amongst each other. We have political games that are being played all the time and they're playing with people's lives.

So you start thinking, 'I want to do something but I don't want to be involved in that political football game.' Or, 'I don't want to be involved in the personal issues that are going on here. I just want to do something that's positive and make a positive change.' And so you have to figure out a way to do that.

And the only way to do that is by starting a project that has nothing to do with the tribe. And nothing to do with the federal government. And get a group of people who also want to see that change and who have a positive, healthy attitude towards things.

In the short selection that follows the commentator starts to make an unfavorable comparison with other areas but then says that people on the reservation still have a sense of sharing and support. As he sees it, historically the Bureau of Indian Affairs broke up the successful ventures his people started. This created dependency and nothing was done to develop the economy. People were then forced on relocation and became discouraged by that. There is still the land but people need jobs and leadership.

Duane Locke graduated in Sociology from Huron College in the mid 1970's. He has worked for the College for ten years as a Center Director at Porcupine--the community where he grew up.

Poverty on the reservation? Whereas in the city, you can probably find a part time job--whether hauling groceries and all

that-- In some ways, I guess, there's advantages of staying on the reservation than going out. On the reservation, I think, there's a lot-- people in a culture where people can assist you or they can be supportive. There's a lot of young people around here that don't have a house, that don't have a car, but they can live within an extended family and help out--whether its a physical type of thing, monetary thing. But I think that you can help out and **people still have the sense of sharing.**

On the outside, you got to look at higher rent payments. But again, **there's a lot more services available.** In some of the better established cities, I guess, there is more--

I think that Indian people always had different ways of surviving. Here was Indian people's past at one time was to do farming. Farming and hunting was probably one of the major ways of surviving at that time in this country. But then we faced a different way of life. Here you are saying you're a farmer but, now we're going to have to put you on this reservation. So they put you on the reservation and then you get a dependency status and you change a way of life for people.

You're a farmer and then you have to keep moving around to move away from the army, cavalry, whatever and so you become nomadic. So you adapt to a different lifestyle. That probably was going on for 400 - 500 years. All of a sudden, you go on to a reservation. They say, 'be on a reservation. Now you're going to be farmers again.' Then you have to adapt to a different way of life. Now your farmers again. Then a little bit of ranching. And those were successful in the early days.

So when it becomes successful then--I don't know why-- Bureau or U.S. government says, 'Well, we got to take this lifestyle away from you. Now we're going to give you all individual land plots so you could do your farming or whatever in those areas. You break up this sense of cooperative type of relationship; you have with different families, neighbors--whatever. Then you go into more of a personal lifestyle--given the schooling and all that. Then it's changed.

Now we come to a point where education is important. Some of our people who signed treaties knew that this different lifestyle was coming up. That's why they included like the education in some of their--as a guarantee in the treaties. Because of the different lifestyles that they have foreseen.

Really it comes down to the dependency status. Here we are, everything is held in trust for us. It's things that the bureau needs to do is probably get more business on the reservation--try to get people to be a little more self sufficient--putting up the capital so you can start those businesses.

Before it was relocation. 'Alright. You're not doing good on the reservation so we'll relocate you to another city.' And a lot of times those people have come back to the reservation because--let's face it--this is still white America. Your going to still see minorities having problems within the cities--within the court systems, federal courts, state courts. You're going to still see those. I think a lot of people get discouraged by-- Here we are on the reservation not knowing what prejudice is--I think you'll see more people accepting people on the outside. But when you go on the outside-- It's a little bit different for people to maybe get a job in one of the surrounding communities. So a lot of times people feel discouraged and come back.

There is a land base large enough to support us for generations. But again-- I guess creations of more jobs would help the people. We do have a large land base. Even the tribe has to be good in the area of management. I know like we had different ranching operations, farm enterprises, different factories come in and yet you have this leadership that is an elective leadership so they don't care. Go in for two years, get what you can and get out. The goal is looking at two years. We kind of really need to look at leadership. I think.

The following interview finds the commentator picking up on the issue of leadership from the Tribal Council. In the end, though, he shifts his focus to the social services programs and their effects on individual initiative.

Floyd White Eyes directs a major grant for the Oglala Sioux Housing Authority. He is a graduate of OLC who also worked for the Applied Sciences program for several years as a counselor after having been a district center counselor.

Well, I would have to say in my opinion in being the poorest county-- I'm going to be direct about this. I think we have poor planning. **I would say our tribal council--** We become dependent on federal money and that's all we look forward to. We're not taking a risk to go beyond federal money.

They say we have natural resources but yet we have so many entities that are against it. **It's just like a big round circle.** We're doing a round dance constantly. That's all we're doing. Like, for example the tribe, they get grants to set up all these programs or an enterprise. It works till the grant money runs out and they don't go beyond that.

The tribe's been taken by other people from different entities. The big factory. You got the Moccasin factory coming in here. You hear about this Japanese, or whatever it is, coming in to make these overalls-- Then they go out and nothing comes out of it.

.....
What keeps our people from going out to find jobs is the social service system. They're bringing in all that money-- funding--giving money to all our young kids. What that's saying is, 'It's alright for you to go out and have kids. We'll take care of them.' The men see that. Why don't I just stick around and make kids. That's probably just the attitude. Of course, once you start into drinking, laziness sets in and you forget about reality.

....
Probably /poverty/ in money. But, I would say in our traditions and how we are-- I don't think so. Psychologically no. To some extent. Well, there's a lot of things that kind of-- Some people would probably disagree with me because of **alcoholism** rate that's here. Just the other night that killing in Wounded Knee-- That kind

of brought a little downfall with us. Because it happened in the housing and here we are trying to upgrade people in the housing.

...
To me I think it makes up for not having the money.

Yeah, the culture. I mean being part of our culture; our pow wows, give-aways, different things--honoring our people, honoring our veterans. That's all there. You see that a lot. I know you've been to someplaces where they've honored you. How did that make you feel? How did you see them?

It made me feel good. So there's a self respect or these terms where your self esteem and so forth that comes from other sources rather than just money.

Right. **Our religion.** Being able to practice our own religion. Being able to feel good about it without any body having to tell you what's wrong. I'm glad we have that back. I think we've all been part of it one time. We still practice it here. I mean-- I've /sun/ danced five years. That kind of opened my eyes for me.

Believing in something. Believing in something it makes you believe in yourself. Once you start believing in yourself, you can just about-- I guess, you can pick your future and how you go from there. The purpose of sun dancing is to give-- offering your appreciation for what Wakan Tanka has been giving to us. That's my concept of it. I think everybody has--..It's probably a life I'll probably stay with because I felt life had a lot of spiritual success with-- You know. Believing in something that keeps me going to where-- Oh I still need individuals to talk to sometimes. I go into depression and things like that. But prayer helps a lot. It has a lot of effect on the individual.

It gets back to our value system. I guess one of the main things is **sharing**. As a tribe as a whole, I wish we could share-- share our thoughts without condemning one another. If every individual took something to believe in I think they can adopt these values, or live by the values.

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The next commentator starts out talking about technical aspects of determining who is poor and the problems miscounting

causes for tribal government funding. He then picks up on a theme of the last interview as he goes on to talk about different measures of success on the reservation. He seems to be referencing what some have called the "dual economy." That is, the welfare economy competes with the possibilities of providing a viable job market. Leadership has to contend with this. He then comments on the problem of getting cooperation when you have historically strong family groups who do not get along. Finally, he notes that historically Lakotas were capitalistic, wealthy and aggressive and on the top.

Mike Her Many Horses is former tribal councilman who is now Executive Director for the Oglala Sioux Tribe. He has worked for the college in the past as a counselor when he first graduated from college and as an instructor after he came back with his Master's degree. He also spent time at the Smithsonian helping with cultural representations and at other museums.

Well, there's a lot of different indicators, I think, that went into that survey to determine the poorest areas in the United States. As a result of the U.S. Census-- For the last two census that have been conducted here the Tribe disputed not so much that there's a lot of poverty here but has disputed like the way the census was carried out and how the numbers were derived at.

We've historically been funded based on population, official population counts, so we've always maintained a higher population for the reservation. Census don't look at the reservation as one unit. They look at Shannon County, Bennett County, Jackson County, of which Pine Ridge encompasses all three. We've always tried to get them to come with a category whereby, we'd say, like these three areas comprise Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. There's 20,000 people here. This is what they look like, statistically. We've never been able to convince census of that. A lot of cities and a lot of other municipalities have tried that as well because federal bucks are based on population figures. We're not politically strong enough to make that change.

But, anyway, we operate under two sets of numbers. One is the Bureau of Indian Affairs Labor Force Statistics, which says there's about 20,000 people here of which 7500 are unemployed--about 80, 85% unemployment. But, we've never been able to get the fed to recognize what one of their own agencies recognizes about us. So we basically service 20,000 to 25,000 people with a population count of somewhere around 13,000 just based on Shannon County's alone. We can't use Bennett County's or Jackson County's. So, the number of dollars we get for services serves a population as basically doubled.

In looking at poverty we look at the statistics. I think the median age in this 90 census was somewhere around 18 , 19 years old. and younger. And there's a very small group of what we generally consider elders. There's about a thousand of them counted in that category. So we got a real young population, for the most part, generally lacking in basic skills--reading, writing, math. In the older population, lets say these elders, 60 and older, who also have low skills, or don't have an education, I guess.

So there's a group here, basically from about 35 to 55 or so that have some background., college and they represent what we consider a tribal leadership. trying to focus on making social change here. Overall, its been a real struggle for them to get into positions of authority and try to make change because we have still within the tribal leadership network people who do believe education is not the way to achieve any measure of success here because they're looking at measures of success in another way--a different way--not just material goods, not just goods and services generated.

Sometimes we consider like raising a family, grandkids, and having them close by is a measure of success. Or keep them in relatively close proximity. That is somehow become a measure of success. Their children around and their grandchildren. It's really hard to change when so many of us, I guess, we see changes--having certain amount of skills that would provide you with an income.

You could either live here or leave. cause you've gotten accustom to having a certain type of lifestyle. We still have a lot of

that going around here. I feel we do personally and its hard to overcome what the big picture looks like because its so narrowed here.

So leadership and tribal government finds it really difficult to look at attracting businesses or industries because largely we got an untrained work force, certainly have a large force. Say out of that 7,000 , 7500 maybe we have a work force that's capable of working maybe 25%. The others because of whatever costs it would to take to train and to , there's some transportation issues, child care issues, the playing field is full of holes, when your trying to deal with the issue of poverty.

When we talk about poverty, we got to talk about **who's definition is it?** Poverty, by and large, is a U. S. Census defines it as a-- A definition-- You have-- I think the last census figure, the income was like \$3,300 or something. Which means that you have \$3,300 in cash generated. That's what people have available as individuals here. But yet, you total up goods and services from federal, state, and tribal programs and that increases per household. Not so much per individual, but per household. Cause they have access to AFDC, grants, or tribal work experience, subsidize housing, subsidize utilities, food stamps, commodities, health care. You total all those up. And we've done this. Try to get an idea of how much we would have to pay an individual--say in a manufacturing venture. We'd have to pay them somewhere right around \$7,50 - \$8.00 to offset all these other goods and services.

So there's a mind set around that says, 'Why encourage people to work?' This is what we said. This is a culture thing. 'We need to fight this system, adopt to this system, make the system work for us. We're successful. Why go out and bust your ass? We are successful because we've gotten to know the system so well that the system adopts or changes to us, not the other way around. They make the rules to limit us and we come up with answers that override that. That's success. Learn how to milk the system for goods and services. Takes initiative and imagination, creativity.' So there's that school of thought.

There's always folks that say well, you got to have some pride and want to work. Well, this takes a lot of foot work, paper work, you got to learn how to fill out forms, know how to use this system. What's so different about over here is that you give them a check every two weeks as your reward for your efforts, but here its subsidized utilities, you get food stamps.

Its an underground economy. that doesn't get calculated into the Bureau of Census Statistics that show the average income is \$3200 or \$3300 whatever it turned out to be. So there's those kinds of schools of thought. I think we have to, here in Pine Ridge, we have to. There's some other factors that are included.

Its just not material wealth measure for me, anyway. Basically, we have to look at what Pine Ridge is comprised of, I think. Pine Ridge to me is comprised of maybe four real true Oglala bands of people who came here with their leaders and said this is gonna be your reservation. But we also have groups of other, tribal groups from other parts of the great Sioux Nation came here , as well as some other tribes like Cheyennes, and they mixed all together. A lot had to do with a lot of conditions we're involved in today. You get people who historically travel in small groups--couple hundred to a band--had this particular territory that was recognized as theirs that they made their livelihood off of. All of a sudden you got them all together.

It just caused so much problems and so we still suffer from that today. You got a housing situation has made that worse. You got people off their own land. And you got to wade through this sort of, or fight your way through this issues of leadership and humanity here.

If your not strong and your not connected or don't have family, you get left out getting whatever goods and services are available. It's real tough to get the kinds of goods and services to support your family if your not of a particular model. The poverty encompasses a lot of other sociological kinds of issues, I think.

In order to achieve any kind of success, you need cooperation. There's a lot of ill will that we have towards one another. It flares up over particular issues. You know, like blood

quantum, language, cultural kinds of issues. Once those ill wills pop up, your not going any where with any thing. A lot of that has to do with the dynamics of how the reservation was established. When we look at-- I heard this as recently as last year, when I sat on the council. People looked at examples of cooperation where communities were able to kind of prosper on their own.

They always mention Red Shirt Table. They had a cattle project up there back in the 20's. That's 70 years ago. Aren't there any more recent models? But, those were all families that were related. They had several strong matriarches , patriarches in that family that made that thing work. Once they were gone, once cattle prices plummeted, they didn't have a project. People still use that as a sort of model, 'We can do that yet.' They keep reminding us, 'Hey, it happened once.'

Sure, we have a lot of historic incidences of cooperation. **We all got together and kicked Custer's ass,** you know. But we haven't kicked any big asses lately because we haven't been able to cooperate. The last example probably is State jurisdiction in 62 where we had a lot of help from the non-Indian community because some members of that community understood what State jurisdiction would be. It would mean higher taxes. Basically, substituting the Bureau of Indian Affairs for State control and that's gonna cost money. Lot of people understood that so like when we talk about taking State to task--we always--all we want to--in state jurisdiction. There's a lot of white folks, 'No, I'm not going for this because its gonna cost me money, its coming out of my pocket. Let it come out of the Fed. Indirectly its out of my pocket.'

Yeah, so anyway, **the cooperation is the thing** that's important to success here. We're not seeing a whole lot of that. We see communities--like today--historically gotten along to the degree that they weren't problems. Now we see communities in disputes over schools, control, and monies. This power-- Families are involved in this. Lot of anger, lot of frustration-- You can always bring this up that-- Services is suppose to be providing educational opportunities for kids. They say, 'Yeah, yeah, we agree on that but I still want to get this person or that person.' Look at tribal issues,

who's the service population on a particular problem,. I don't see young people-- But you got personnel problems--..People can't get along so you got to get rid of some of them.

Like I mentioned, at the start of the interview, this is the two groups that I see that are the two schools of thought here about how you measure success. Sure we got a lot of folks that are **materialistic**, I think. They want a nice car. They want access to services. And you got people here saying, "I don't think that's important. I think some other things are important "

.....

In studying history, our history, you look at the face of-- Lets say on the treaty issues,-- How much territory is in dispute between us and the United States? **It took an aggressive, capitalistic society** to go out and acquire that amount of territory and control it. There was no weinnies that went out there and done it. Nobody gave it to us. And so we have that attitude one hundred fifty years ago to an attitude of dependence. It just don't make sense to me. I'm always trying to search for answers there. And yet so many of our people refuse to believe we were that way. Cause that's the way the white man is. How did we go out and control major parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, both Dakotas, Minnesota, Nebraska? It took aggressive people-- Took a lot of planning, knowledge of the environment, where food was-- We take a certain pride in that--warbonnet warrior. Yet we don't know what he's like. What's his composition?

...

And the other point of that is , **we generated a lot of material wealth--buffalo culture**. It wasn't in dollars and cents. But it was in goods and services that we generated. And you look at historical accounts, the attitude of our people showed that we were **on the top**.

The following commentator talks about the problems with the temporary jobs provided by the Tribe's programs--they only last a few years. Families look out for their own in other arenas.

Phinet Red Owl has been a center director for the college for three years. During the thirteen years before that she was a tutor. She is a graduate of OLC in Elementary education. Her husband s a tribal councilman.

There's all the new programs coming in. They all have quite a few job openings but each program are set up like one or two years. They give a job for that many years and its over. It doesn't get refunded or something. Then they're out of jobs. I guess you need more-- Maybe the tribe needs to get factories or something where there's a lot of employment. There's people that start their little stores but its usually family or a few people that work there. **Everybody's on their survival, I guess.** Set your own little store up and keep it going.

My mom never worked. She stayed home. My dad worked for the BIA, Road Department. Sixteen years ago my father died. I had some brothers. They worked in a fish hook factory long time ago when it was in Pine Ridge. They worked there until that folded up.then they did farm work or ranching.

Do many people do any farm or ranch work any more?

I don't think so. **They're probably trying to keep it in families too.** They don't do much hiring outside of their own families. Around here you don't have too many people working ranch work.

The following commentator suggests that the census misses the informal economy. This is not really the poorest county if you consider transfer payments, free things like food, clothing. Poverty is really a mindset that people here can break out of since they have the spirit. The system discourages people though because the transition from welfare to a job is so difficult. For instance, you are penalized for getting an education and for taking a low wage job. There is no support for child care and transportation.

Dani Not Help Him has been a student off the reservation and at OLC. She worked as a tutor for OLC at the Pine Ridge Center for over a year. She now works for the Lakota Fund in their Circle Banking Project where she helps train small groups to develop and manage their own micro -enterprises.

When you talk about us being the poorest county in the United States, that's just based on some data that's been collected--I imagine--for the census. Right? And it's what people are reporting. That would be what they're receiving in some cases from work, in some cases from Social Services. I think that that is kind of false in a lot of ways. Because-- I think especially-- We've been going out in the districts and visiting with people a lot. And almost everybody we visited with does something on the side. And of course they aren't going to tell Social Services about whether they do beadwork or selling wood or whatever.

Pretty much everybody is doing something on the side to make extra money. And in a lot of cases--..We do a lot of budgeting with people and we'll go to people's house and they'll say, 'I received this many dollars a month.' If we're going to be doing budgeting with them and then not list things--like people get energy assistance. Or, I don't know if you ever heard of negative rent. Where somebody gets paid money to live a house but that money is applied to some of their bills. They don't consider that income and we do at the office. Or they don't consider their food stamps income but we count it as income in the budgeting. So, I think people are getting a lot more income than actually they're reporting because they don't consider all these extra things income when they technically are. This is the way I think anyway. I think--

I don't think this is really the poorest county in the nation. I think that people have access to enough money where they could probably survive. They might not be able to survive at a extravagant level. They might not have all these extras that your average has--become use to having in their home or whatever. But, I don't think from the income available to people here, that there'd

be anybody starving or anything like that. Like you would see in a third world country. Or I don't think its a complete crisis situation.

We have a lot of free give away things, too, like the food bank here--over here--or donations of clothes--donations of this and that every once in a while. Which is to me that is like income. Because that is money you don't have to spend on that food or money you have to spend on those clothes. So to me I consider that income cause that's money I don't have to spend on something else. And I don't think a lot of people think that way. But to me I don't think its, the poverty here is lack of resources, lack of money.

The poverty here is like a mindset kind of things. Its like people are poor in their heads. And so many of our programs have become used to using this figure, you know. They're saying, 'We're the poorest county in the nation. Its so sad her.' And everyone's so stuck in that because its their access to funds or access to these donations. So everyone is become so tuned to that. That's all they know how to say. Like we just gave a presentation--

It's a lack of pride, it seems like to me. You know what I mean? Like there've been times like I went out and lived in Utah for a year. And when we were first out there, of course-- You know how it is when you first move someplace. Like you said when you don't have a job yet. You just like have a very limited budget. Its like even when we were our poorest, poorest, poorest when we first got out there-- I mean, even when we're poor the yard wasn't all dirty and the house was clean inside. So you know its not lack of money that keeps people living in their homes. It's the lack of something else. We're not sure exactly what it was.

A lot of people get angry cause when we talk about stuff like this. We talk about our ancestors were oppressed, had things taken away from them, and they've created this cycle of dependency. But we feel that we can break out of that--break out of that cycle---And that people here have enough spirit to do that kind of stuff. But I don't know what it is. Like a lack of motivation or something. And people have become-- As we go on further, more and more rely on this, 'We're the poorest county in the nation added to as a kind of a crutch.

Because it is kind of tough to get going at first. And it takes a while to get established with certain things. I mean I can tell anybody that. A lot of people say, 'Oh you don't know what its like to have this or that.' And I say, 'Yes, I do.' I don't know what it is. I'm just at a loss.

But, what I think it is its a lack of motivation. People that come to rely on this. That's why I get kind of mad when I say, this is the poorest county in the nation cause I think its become kind of a crutch for people around here.

I don't think its something that's just here. Its something that's throughout the country. That if somebody is at a certain level-- They're on government dependence programs--or whatever. That's really hard to get from that program into either working or doing anything for themselves. Going to school, or whatever. Because I don't think its just a problem here its a problem in the nation that--

There's that lack of support, for self improvement support, like day care, transportation. You know they say-- You hear this thing all the time where they say, 'lazy Indian. He just sits home on government dough.' Which is ridiculous because no one has a motivation to get a job. Most people live away from maybe the central town or whatever. And if they want to get a job there well, of course, they're going to need transportation back and forth from this job.

How are they going to get that transportation initially if they didn't have the job in the first place, you know. I mean not just that but with day care. I think day care is a real big problem here, but its a big problem across the country. Its starting to come more into the lime light here with the stuff-- With the Attorney General and the case with the family that left --not that one so much--the family that left their kids and went on vacation. But, you know, there've been exposes on a lot of people that are having to leave their kids at home while they work because they just can't afford day care. That's true across the whole country and here as well.

And you know there's certain other factors here that accentuate that--that lack of good day care. Like-- This is even personal experience in just what I can see people doing. Like-- Hate to call down the college. But when I was first working at the college I didn't make a whole lot of money. And even when I left the college I wasn't making a whole lot. And I sat down several times and did studies of me working--me just stopping work and staying home with my kid and not doing anything. And I would of had more money available to me to spend staying at home.

So I don't think its a matter of lazy Indian or anything like that. I get mad when people say that about us because its not true. What motivation do you really have to work? And not until recently--when I got a raise this year--that I can sit down and actually work the budget out for the whole household and see that I'm ahead working. But I had to work about three or four years to get to this level. And so what are people's motivation to work? I don't think there's enough motivation to work. There's more motivation not to work. I don't think it's just a problem here. It's a problem everywhere.

I think it's a problem everywhere. I do. Because we have the minimum wage is \$4.25 and there's a lot of people that are trying to work at that level and support a family. And you look back and it's just a standard of living everywhere. It's really split. There's a group of people that are struggling daily to get by and there's a group of super wealthy people that control most of the income.

You look back in the old things of the fifties. Or whatever, you know. If the husband in the house with these--stereotypical June Cleaver kind of households, the husband worked they can have a house,-- They can have a house, with the 2.3 children or whatever. But that's not true anymore. Cause like you were saying-- Like this free trade agreement or whatever makes the minimum wage-- It has to be so low to keep these businesses afloat but it's not enough for people to raise families on. I think it's the same here and everywhere. Yeah, I think that is a problem.

First of all, there aren't that many jobs here. The second thing is, it's not really a fair job structure. It's who you know, who your related to in a lot of cases that make you able to get certain jobs. Also, the other problems that are talked about-- Like if you do go to work, how are you going to get there.

What are you going to do initially for that transition from getting off of welfare and going to work. I know a while ago-- Not very long ago as a matter of fact, people were getting cut off when they started to go to school. Because the Pell money would come in and they would look at that strictly as income. And we're running into that a lot right now with people we work with who are on Aid or GA. And they're trying to get started in a small business. And the minute they get a loan from us they're cut off without them even looking and saying, 'This loan is going to be invested in this business and this business probably won't even show a distinct profit at all for a while.' But yet people are just getting cut off right away.

There's just not support to get into something like that. Whether it be school or self employment or employment with somebody else.

...

Is there anything else you want to say ?

That's all I'll say to the world today.

Conclusions.

inquiry Seek, search, make inquiry, look for, scan, reconnoiter, explore, sound, rummage, ransack, pry, peer, look round; overhaul; look behind the scenes; nose, nose out, trace up; hunt out, fish out, ferret out; unearth. (Roget's Pocket Thesaurus)

**"Let the inquiry respond to people in such a way that they can find the theory, the world's theoria."
(Rose, 1993c)**

These commentaries on poverty at Pine Ridge suggest several themes that we might try to summarize and comment upon First, many Native American people who have themselves lived in

economic poverty recognize that other realms of life need not be subordinated to economics. Native cultures are seen as richer than white society in many ways. Thus, family and culture can be robust in spite of limited resources. Indeed, one tribal leader suggested in conversation that economic poverty had helped to "insulate and protect the culture." On the other hand Mike Her Many Horses pointed out that in pre-reservation times, "We generated a lot of material wealth--buffalo culture. It wasn't in dollars and cents. But it was in goods and services that we generated. And you look at historical accounts, the attitude of our people showed that we were on the top."

It should be noted, though, that while the first commentator stated strongly that the whole idea of poverty was foreign to his system of thought and was in fact an idea "started by the white people," no other found it so strange an idea that they could not engage it in some way. A transition in idea systems, then, is taking place. A transition, though, that does not just plug into the dominant culture's way of thinking about these things.

Others have pointed out that in fact Lakotas were wealthy in economic terms in pre-reservation times. If you take account not just of the vast land holdings in their capital base but of the game, skills, products, and domestic facilities each family possessed in their prime, each family would be accounted a multi millionaire in today's economy. Culture and families can be robust in tough times but huge herds of buffalo, piles of tanned buffalo robes and mcat, and the raw materials for art, dance regalia, give aways, and celebrations might help. And, indeed, many Lakota's have seen the loss of the buffalo as key to the weakening of their traditional culture. Seven years ago, in fact, Birgil Kills Straight organized a conference on economics called Tatanka Iyacin, "looking for the buffalo" at the college."

In these open ended conversations starting from the recent census figures on poverty, almost every person commented upon the debilitating effects of the welfare system. The OST Executive Director suggested there is a certain pride in being able to "milk the system." But he, like others, also pointed to the discouragement and inertia brought about by a system where, "There's just not support to get

into something like that. Whether it be school or self employment or employment with somebody else." But, several people mentioned that people have to survive. One commentator notes that people now "feel abandoned" because the supports that used to be afforded from legal aid, civil rights and other advocates have been cut or terminated.

Shirley Brewer elaborated on the idea that welfare was hard on pride and along with racism damages self esteem. As did Duane and others, she said it was part of the "whole system" that broke up families and kept people from taking charge of their own lives and institutions. Yet, she herself showed that with enough spirit one could get off of welfare (as did Dani). Shirley eloquently points to the role of recovery programs in the process of freeing oneself from the damages done by historical oppression coupled with chemicals used for relief from the oppression.

Spiritualism, freedom, and doubts about the materialism of the dominant society also play a part in how people view the poverty situation. While Charlie indicates that it is how you feel "inside" that counts, he also notes that people have to have the security of family and friends, that television and politics play a strong role in how people think and act. Bill recognizes the beauty in the simple, free yet cooperative life he knew as a reservation child. And, he rejects the dependency of today and the materialism of whites. He seeks instead the power of a Don Juan. Dani emphasized that poverty was a mindset that involved a lack of pride. However, people have the spirit to "breakout" but the system interferes.

Land emerges as a theme from several of these people. Bill emphasizes the spiritual nature of land for the old people--land was the root of their being. Duane says, "There is a land base large enough to support us for generations." But Mike notes that, "You got a housing situation has made that worse. You got people off their own land." Pointing here to the fact that Housing and Urban Development (part of "the system") regulations forced the OST to build houses in clusters away from people's own land. In other conversations tribal leaders have suggested that truck gardening and organic gardening are one means of respecting the land--*makoche*--

and providing for self sufficiency and possibly broader economic development.

Change is a theme that runs through most of the talk we encounter here. Charles focuses on the individuals he works with, "change to a different level would disrupt their lifestyle and disrupt their security and make them paranoid." Bill reflects on the changes he has seen. Shirley points to historical changes in the family, her personal changes and her youthful hopes to create change. "And my mind was thinking, 'Some day I'm going to come back and I'm going to change all this. I'm going to change the way it is.' And I operated under that--that hope, I guess--for a long time." Now she thinks, "But maybe my grandkids and my great grandkids will see a significant change." Rosalie, though, has hopes of creating change for her own kids lives.

Sure they're going to have problems and stuff. But I want to be able to make a change here for them. So that they can live a good life. Not a struggle. Not constantly having to fight for something or wanting a change and yet not having anybody to listen to them and to help them make that change.

Leadership towards this change came up in many of the commentaries. Charles Stewart mentions that he sees no one working on training in spirituality and he talks about dysfunctional behavior in tribal politics and programs. Bill notes how people come to him to resolve their problems but he can not do it anymore, "If something happens today, I'm not sure where I would go for help. At one time I knew exactly where to go." He, in fact, has pulled back from wanting the leadership role he once had, "There's nothing more worthy of our manhood than to pursue power. There's nothing more worthy in life than to have that task of being a hunter of power, great hunter of power. It sounds romantic and all that but, it's not. It's very basic."

Shirley points out how the system undermines attempts to involve parents and the community in their institutions. Rosalie, though, is convinced that,

You start thinking about all that and you think, 'there's got to be something we can do. We're from here, we live here. We want our kids to be here. Our roots are here, This is our home and there has to be something we can do. We can't just sit back and continue to have these things happen.'

But, like Duane, Floyd, Mike, and Charles she feels like, "You have this leadership that is an elective leadership so they don't care." She might not agree with Duane's statement that "they don't care" but sees that they are not able to function because of factions and personalities--issues noted by several commentators. Rosalie emphasizes, though, that, "if I sit idly and just look at everything and just start complaining about it, then I seem to get more depressed." Moreover, "if there's going to be a change and if we're going to get out of the poverty that they say we're in to, it's something we're going to do ourselves." She, then, seems to be of a mindset to see the factions, welfare, dysfunctional behavior, outside interference and resistance to change as challenges. She, like almost every one of these people suggests that she has hope and that things will change. If, as she says, you can "get a group of people who also want to see that change and who have a positive, healthy attitude towards things. "

Teggart, among others, suggests that the transition from a tribal kinship based organizational structure to a political structure is the key transition point in the major processes of history. It is at this point where traditional forms of stability and inertia are loosened and the new forms lack genuine legitimacy that creativity and self assertion become most evident over the long course of human history. "This, at bottom, is the fact upon which all history turns.." (273) He goes on to say, "A new idea system will arise which is not a selection of materials drawn from various sources, but a resultant of the juxtaposition of different bodies of thought." (286-87)

Now we come to a point where education is important. Some of our people who signed treaties knew that this different lifestyle was coming up. That's why they included like the education in some of their--as a guarantee in

the treaties. Because of the different lifestyles that they have foreseen. (Duane Locke)

Indeed, the form of the educational system created by the Lakota leadership at Pine Ridge--such as Gerald One Feather, Birgil Kills Straight and others--is more than "a selection of materials" drawn from existing institutions. There are genuinely creative elements in the organizational structure from the involvement of local advisory boards with a member on the main board to staff/faculty governance system, to the relationships of the local district center staff to their students and communities.

Curriculum, though, is an area where such creativity has been less in evidence. though an area people struggle with continually. The great hand of academic tradition and textbook manufacturing is less easily escaped than the particular organizational mediums it flows through. In the final chapters we will look at what people have to say about this vehicle for change and leadership, about its role in addressing a sovereign and secure future for the Lakota people, and the suggestions there are for change to do a better job. First, though, we take a look at commentaries on other realms of institutional life that impinge on reservation economics and constitute the world the college works within.

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